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ABSTRACT

A study analyzed a range of factors associated with male and female low attainment and the subsequent routes of low attainers leaving S4 up to the age of 19, using the Scottish School Leavers Survey data from 1978-96. The most significant trend was the extent to which low attainment declined, although significant differences in terms of gender were also found. In 1978, the extent of low attainment was broadly similar between the sexes, but females improved at a faster rate. Social background and area characteristics were the strongest predictor of low attainment. A large fall was identified in the numbers leaving school and entering directly into employment. A desire among low attainers for employment rather than training prevailed. A small proportion found stable employment; the routes of the majority were characterized by uncertainty with frequent switching between statuses. While more females entered employment, on leaving school they had lower levels of participation in training. Compared to better-qualified S4 leavers, male low attainers were less likely to have been continually employed, complete training, and have a greater instability in routes followed. However, the majority were employed at age 18/19. Just over half of all low attainers gained any form of additional qualifications. Female S4 leavers were likely to gain some form of additional qualification. (Appendixes contain 55 references and data tables.) (YLB)

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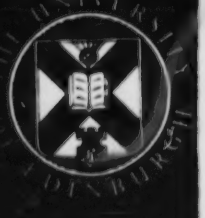

CES CENTRE *for* EDUCATIONAL SOCIOLOGY

SCOTTISH SCHOOL LEAVERS' SURVEY

GENDER AND LOW ACHIEVEMENT

Report commissioned by

THE SCOTTISH EXECUTIVE
EDUCATION DEPARTMENT

March 2000

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The University *of* Edinburgh

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The views expressed in this paper are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect those of the Scottish Executive which funded the study.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

This report is one of a series commissioned by the former Scottish Office Education and Industry Department (SOEID), which are based on the secondary analysis of data from the Scottish School Leavers' Survey (SSLS) formerly the Scottish Young People's Surveys (SYPS). There are four other reports in the series, focusing on:

- Entrants to Higher Education,
- High achieving Females,
- Entrants to Government Training Programmes,
- Entrants to Employment.

The original focus of this report was to be low achieving males, but it has been broadened to examine low attainment among both sexes with particular attention to the differences between males and females. It was decided that this was necessary not only to provide a comparative perspective, but also because there is a lack of empirical data to support the idea that the problems associated with low attainment are specific to males. The report initially examines the trends and characteristics associated with low attainment and then goes on to highlight the initial routes followed by low attaining S4 leavers, before finally examining whether any of the low attainers manage to improve their qualifications by age 18/19.

Background

Until relatively recently concerns about educational attainment and gender had tended to focus on issues of equality, with concerns about disadvantages within the educational system leading to the under-performance of young women. Initially these concerns were general in nature, but more recently focused on female's under-performance in specific subjects. During the 1980's a number of programmes were aimed at boosting participation and performance (Women into Science and Engineering (WISE), Girls into Science and Technology (GIST)), although there have been few schemes directed at young women in Scotland. Concerns were raised in the Cockcroft Report (HMSO, 1982) which highlighted girls relative under-performance in mathematics. However, in terms of educational attainment, females in Scotland have been increasingly outperforming males at Standard Grade since the early 1980's, and in 1994 females outperformed males in all subject areas at Standard Grade with the exception of Physical Education (Ganson and De Luca, 1995). These changes have not been specific to Scotland but have been mirrored elsewhere in the UK and abroad.

International trends highlighted by Willms and Kerr (1987), showed that in societies with high literacy levels girls typically outperform boys in most subject areas at the elementary level but during the adolescent years boys acquire an advantage in mathematics and science. A recent UN report highlighted that in countries with literacy levels above 50 percent, girls' educational performance has been improving at a faster rate than boys (UN, 1995).

These gender differentials in attainment need to be set alongside the wider changes in patterns of attainment and educational participation. Attainment levels have been improving for both males and females, although females have been improving at a faster rate. Alongside this improvement in the qualification profile of young people leaving Scottish schools, we have also witnessed huge increases in the proportions remaining at school beyond the age of 16. Once again there are significant differences in terms of gender: female participation rates have typically been around 10 percent higher than males. Recent figures show that about a third of males (34%) leave school at the minimum age compared to a quarter of females (26%) (SOEID, 1996). The largest increases in attainment have occurred among the middle attainment group, but increasingly young people with low attainment are choosing to remain at school for an extra year or two. There have been a number of studies examining the changing patterns of participation in education in Scotland and the factors related to these changes and it is not our intention to re-cover this ground in the analysis within this report (Paterson and Raffe, 1995; Biggart and Furlong, 1996).

Despite these clear improvements in attainment and participation, comparisons with our economic competitors and even within the UK show the relative position of Scotland to be somewhat weaker. While Scotland performs well at the level of Higher Education overall participation rates in education are among the lowest in Europe and in terms of international comparisons Scotland tends to fare badly in certain basic skills (UN, 1998). The recent Schools Inspectors Report in Scotland has also raised concern over the levels of writing, reading and numeracy skills. 16-18 year olds in FE or training perform worse than in other parts of the UK (Scottish Office, 1999; DfEE/Cabinet Office, 1996).

This expansion of participation in education and training, with good levels of performance at the upper end of the spectrum of attainment throughout the UK, has shifted attention onto low attainers and weaknesses among the lower attainers in terms of core skills. This has been highlighted by the introduction of the National Education and Training Targets with different and more ambitious targets set for Scotland, where Level 2 qualifications are increasingly seen as the minimum level for employability (Raffe *et al.*, 1998).

A number of recent statements from commentators south of the border have highlighted the centrality of concerns over low attainment among males in England and Wales:

> *'...the failure of boys and in particular white working-class boys is one of the most disturbing problems we face within the whole educational system.' (Chris Woodhead, Chief Inspector of schools in England, quoted in TES March 15th, 1996)*

> *'We must challenge the laddish anti-learning culture which has been allowed to develop over recent years and not simply accept with a shrug of the shoulder boys will be boys.' (School Standards Minister, Stephen Byers, DfEE Press release 002/98)*

Despite this renewed focus on low achieving males, their under-performance is not a new issue; in the past females consistently outperformed males in tests for entrance to selective secondary schools (Gipps and Murphy 1994). Separate quotas for boys and girls in allocating

grammar school places were defended on the grounds of biological factors; males were perceived as maturing at a slower rate than females, but likely to catch up and surpass females within the secondary school. While females have now overtaken males at all levels up to Higher Education, there is a lack of strong evidence to support the view expressed in the quotation above that males are increasingly developing negative attitudes towards education. Many earlier studies highlighted the anti-school attitudes among groups of young males (Willis, 1977; Hargeaves, 1967), although young people of both sexes have been found increasingly to be expressing positive attitudes towards compulsory school. A disaffected minority of around one in ten young people, however, express more negative attitudes (DfEE, 1997), a group which some have argued have become increasingly separated from the mainstream (Arnot *et al.*, 1998).

The specific concern with low attainment among young males has also been partially fuelled by media stereotypes of disaffected young men and associated problems of criminality, although this has been perhaps less of an issue in Scotland than in some other parts of the UK. In Scotland, the issue has been closely tied up with renewed concerns about social exclusion or inclusion, skill levels, economic competitiveness, lifelong learning and the restructuring of the economy. These concerns are highlighted by the setting-up of the Beattie Committee in 1998 (Scottish Executive, 1999) to examine the needs among low attaining young people and those with physical or learning disabilities with a specific focus on skills and employability. As a result of changing labour market opportunities, qualifications have become increasingly important and are likely to become more so as the knowledge based economy is now seen as essential to Scotland's future competitiveness and prosperity (Scottish Office, 1999).

Labour market changes have had a disproportionate effect on young males with below average levels of attainment. The collapse of the manufacturing sector of employment, which began in the mid-1970's, has radically altered the sorts of jobs available to young people entering the labour market. The shift from manufacturing to service occupations and the growing proportion of part-time work, coupled with increasing participation by adult women, have impacted upon the prospect of school leavers. This is especially the case for minimum-aged male school leavers who traditionally entered craft apprenticeships or less skilled work within the manufacturing sector. Many of the traditional industries (ship-building, mining, steel and fishing) which male early school leavers entered in their thousands have now almost gone. The service sector now accounts for around three-quarters of all jobs in Scotland, with only 16 percent of employment in manufacturing (Scottish Office, 1998). Some commentators have suggested that as many as 70 percent of new jobs created in the UK will be in occupations (eg managerial, associated professional and clerical occupations) traditionally dominated by women (Hughes, 1996, quoted in Arnot *et al.*, 1998).

There has been a lack of recent studies examining the impact of significant labour market changes on young people with low levels of attainment and who leave school at the minimum

age. Research studies into the early labour market routes of young people in Scotland and evaluations of the various forms of youth training date back to the 1980's.

These earlier studies found a strong influence of qualifications on employment, and with a shrinking youth labour market, found evidence of the job queue at work, with employers recruiting up the attainment hierarchy as job opportunities declined (Raffe, 1984; Shelly, 1988). In terms of those participating in training, Furlong *et al.*, (1990), found participation in YTS enhanced subsequent employment chances irrespective of whether participants remained on the scheme for the full 12 months. Participation had little impact on earnings, except among the better qualified who suffered a relative wage penalty. Recent research has, however, tended to focus on patterns of participation in education and there have been fewer studies that focus on labour market participation.

The data

Since 1976, school leavers' surveys have been conducted on a regular basis in Scotland. Up until 1990 they were conducted biennially by the CES, in the form of the Scottish Young People's Survey (SYPS), in partnership with the Scottish Office, the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC, formerly SSRC), and other sponsors. Since 1992 it has been known as the Scottish School Leavers' Survey (SSLS) and has been carried out by the National Centre for Social Research (NCSR, formerly SCPR), funded by the SOEID with additional support in 1993 from Strathclyde Regional Council (Lynn, 1995).

Each survey was conducted by post, using a questionnaire of up to 16 pages. Most surveys covered a 10% sample of school leavers from all secondary schools, except special schools, in Scotland. (The 1978 and 1980 surveys involved larger samples, from which 10% sub-samples have been used in the dataset used here). Response rates to all the leavers' surveys have generally been high: between 70% and 80%, except in 1990 when the response rate was 56%. Each survey was carried out in the spring following the session in which the young people left school. For clarity, years quoted in the report refer to the year of leaving school, and not the year of the survey. In addition to the leavers' surveys, since 1986 regular follow-up surveys have been conducted, which represent a cross-section of an S4 cohort, who are re-contacted at the age of 18/19, in the spring approximately three years after first becoming eligible to leave school. Response rates to the follow-up surveys have generally been in the region of 50-60% of the original samples.

Three main datasets are used in this analysis, the Trends dataset (1978-1990), the follow-up Reconstructed Cohort (1992-1995) and the 1996 SSLS cohort survey. The Trends dataset is held at the CES and contains key variables from leavers' surveys conducted biennially between 1978 and 1990. The trend analysis is based on this dataset and where appropriate supplemented by more recent surveys.

The Reconstructed Cohort is based on three leavers' surveys (S4 leavers who left school in 1992; S5 leavers who left in 1993 and S6 leavers who left in 1994), combined with a follow-

up survey of the same S4 and S5 leavers which was conducted in spring 1995. The results that are reported in Chapters 4 and 5 are based on this Reconstructed Cohort for young people leaving from S4. The limitations of the data mean we cannot report on the labour market routes of the additional group of early leavers who leave in December of S5. It might be a fair assumption that December leavers within our low attainment group would have similar characteristics to their peers leaving from S4. However, an assessment of previous data showed that December leavers are more likely to enter employment rather than other education or training routes.

At the time of writing this report the 1996 SSLS survey is the most recent survey available for the research. The 1996 survey marked a change in the survey design, moving from a survey of leavers' to a survey of an S4 cohort, similar to those conducted previously by the CES. As a result the data from the 1996 survey is not directly comparable with previous years' surveys.

Our definition of low attainment includes all those who fail to achieve any Standard Grades at grades 1 to 3, or in earlier survey years, Ordinary Grades at A to C. While this does not correspond with current distinctions within Standard Grades based on Credit, General and Foundation levels, this definition has been adopted to ensure a consistent definition across the years.

Due to changes and availability of data, figures based on surveys prior to 1990 are based on Standard or Ordinary Grade attainment prior to leaving school (ie they could be obtained from S4, S5 or S6), while more recent surveys are based on attainment at the end of S4. In earlier years a small proportion of young people may have repeated Standard Grades in S5, which may slightly underestimate the extent of low attainment compared to more recent years, which is based on attainment at the end of S4.

In the earlier survey years Standard Grade attainment is based on self-reported attainment, while in the most recent years it has been linked with recorded data provided by the SEB/SQA. The qualification data for attainment at age 18/19 is based on self-reported data obtained through the follow-up surveys. Some additional information has been linked to the data sets. The unemployment rate of LEC of the school the young person attended are provided through NOMIS and Carstairs deprivation scores based on postcodes. The Carstairs scores were provided through a mapping conducted by McLoone (1995) based on the 1991 Census, an updated version of the original formulae provided by Carstairs and Morris (1991).

The Scottish School Leavers Surveys are based on young people educated within mainstream schools. Although it is increasingly common for young people with Record of Needs Statements to be educated within mainstream schools, a proportion of low attaining young people educated within specialist institutions are excluded from the survey. A previous study conducted by the Universities of Edinburgh and Stirling examined the post-16 transitions of young people with a Record of Needs (Ward *et al.*, 1991). The majority of their sample had attended special schools or special education units within mainstream schools. Only 6.5% had

been educated in mainstream education. Following compulsory education the majority (57.4%) remained in education. After leaving school the sample followed three main routes, 19 percent went on to special further education, a quarter went into some form of work training or work experience programme, while 28 percent went into sheltered workshops or an Adult Training Centre (ATC). Only small proportions were found to obtain open employment on leaving special education (4.9%). The authors also drew attention and expressed concern about the fact that they lost contact with one in five of their sample, whom they were unable trace despite strenuous efforts through a variety of different agencies.

Chapter 2

Trends in low attainment

In this chapter we describe the trends in the patterns of low attainment among males and females from the late 1970's up until 1996. We explore the influence of social background and parental attainment, factors associated with attainment, and how these have changed over time.

Declining low attainment

Figure 2.1 presents the trend in terms of attainment of Scottish school leavers for males from the late 1970's up to the most recent data in 1996. It is important to note that due to the recent survey design changes the qualification data for the years 1978 to 1993 are based on qualifications obtained on leaving school, whereas the 1996 data is based on Standard Grades obtained in S4. As this affects those in the higher attaining bands most, the figures for the two lowest attainment bands in which we are interested are broadly comparable. However, as it was more common to re-sit Ordinary Grades than is the case for Standard Grades, this may slightly underestimate the degree of improvement in recent years.

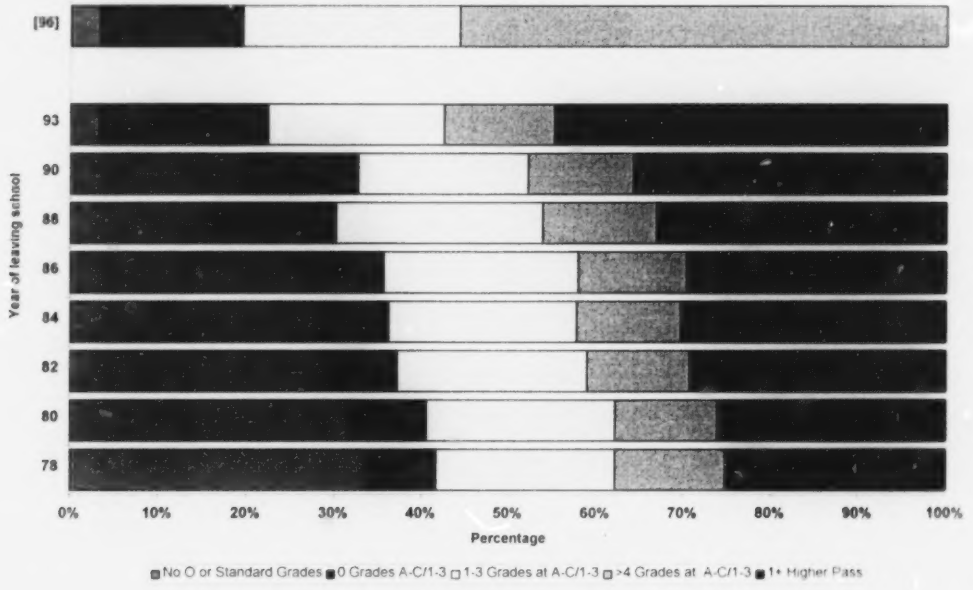

Figure 2.1: Males: Attainment by year of leaving school

Comparable data for females is provided in Figure 2.2. In the late 1970's the attainment profile of males and females were broadly similar with just over two-fifths of males and females falling into our definition of low attainment. Since then, levels of low attainment have fallen steadily with females improving their position at a faster rate relative to the males. By 1996, the proportions with no Standard Grades at 1-3 had fallen to 20 percent of males and only 12 percent of females.

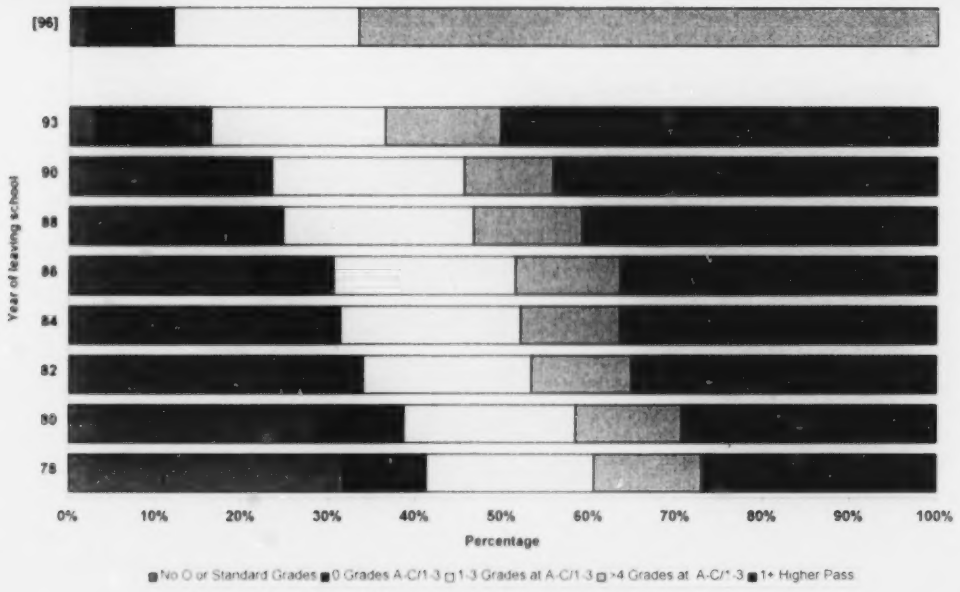

Figure 2.2: Females: Attainment by year of leaving school

This decline in low attainment has been at a steady pace, with the exception of males in 1990, where the proportion of low attainers increased slightly, but this was followed by a sharp decline in 1992. The main policy change that occurred in relation to qualifications over the period was the initial introduction of Standard Grades in 1986. They were phased in gradually over a period of years. Since their introduction there has been a rapid fall in the proportion of young people who did not gain any awards at all. Whereas around a third of young people obtained no award in 1978 (34% of males and 32% of females), by 1996 this had fallen to 3 and 2 percent respectively. Prior to the introduction of Standard Grades many of our potentially low attaining pupils would have been denied access to any form of national certification. Although girls had already overtaken boys in terms of attainment they were assumed to have benefited from the inclusion of assessed course work in Standard Grade and a curriculum which redressed some traditional imbalances in option choice (Turner *et al.*, 1995).

Comparing the situation in Scotland to the rest of Britain shows that England and Wales have witnessed similar reduction in low attainment. In 1985, 46 percent of young people achieved no GCSE passes at A-C; by 1996 this had fallen to only 27 percent (DfEE, 1997). As throughout the rest of Britain, low attainment among Scottish school leavers has declined and if the current trend continues will continue to fall. In less than two decades the proportion of low attainers has more than halved, and by 1996 the low attainment group represented around a fifth of males and only one in ten females.

The trend data set allows us to document change over time among a number of key variables that are often associated with attainment, in particular variables that are related to family background.

Social class of low attainers

Despite general claims that the influence of family background has been eroded as the educational system has become more meritocratic, the influence of family background has remained a persistent determinant of educational attainment. Within the Scottish education system, there has been a long-standing view and a pride in its meritocratic nature, where with hard work and diligence working class individuals could succeed within education. Many academics have exposed this as a myth with few real foundations.

> *No myth is more prevalent and persistent than that asserting Scotland is a more equal society than England (or Britain) and the Scots are somehow 'more egalitarian' than others in these Islands.* (McCrone *et al.*, 1981, quoted in Powney, 1996 p.61)

Figure 2.3 shows the proportion of males that belong to the low attainment group according to the social class of their father.

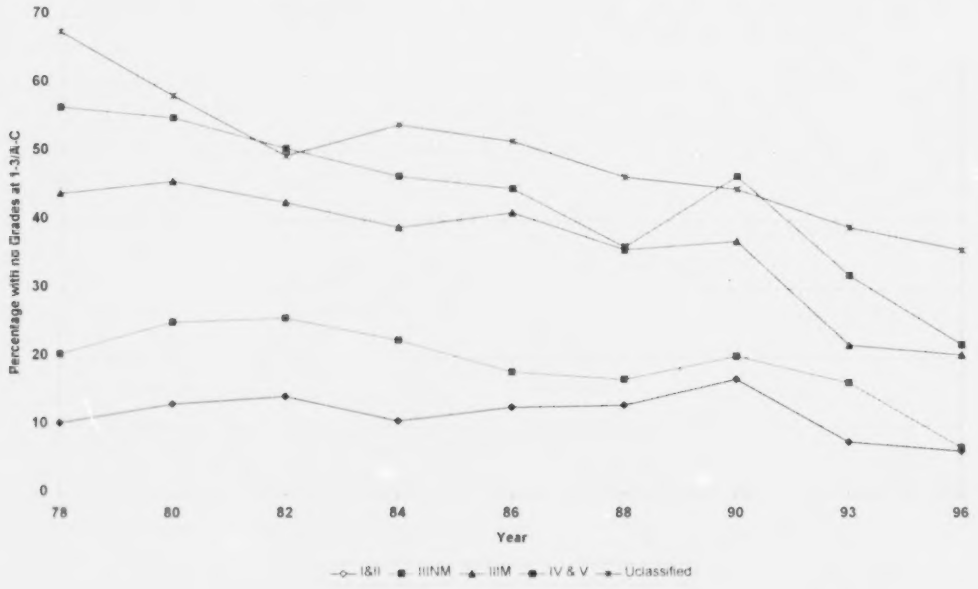

Figure 2.3: Males: Proportion of low attainers by father's social class

In the late 1970's we can see that for both males and females (Figure 2.4) there was a strong relationship between low attainment and the social class hierarchy. As the level of low attainment has fallen over the two decades we can see that those in the lower social classes have made real gains in reducing their levels of low attainment. On the other hand the proportion of low attainers from the non-manual classes (classes I&II and IIINM) have remained relatively level across the period, at least up until the 1990's, (albeit at a significantly lower level than the manual classes), while those among the lower social classes have steadily been decreasing their proportion of low attainers.

Although the apparent trend is one of narrowing social class inequalities, there still remains a significant difference between the highest and lowest social class of the order of around 25 percent. Looking at Figure 2.3 for males: by 1996 the lines for several of the classes appear to

have converged, with similar proportions of low attainers among all the non-manual classes and similar convergence among manual classes. The trend for the unclassified group was different and there was not such a great reduction in the proportion of low attainers among the unclassified group. Although the unclassified group does not form a distinct class in itself it often behaves like one. It represents a rather heterogeneous group comprising those who fail to give sufficient information about their father's occupation, but also contains a high proportion[1] of father's who are unemployed or registered as sick or disabled.

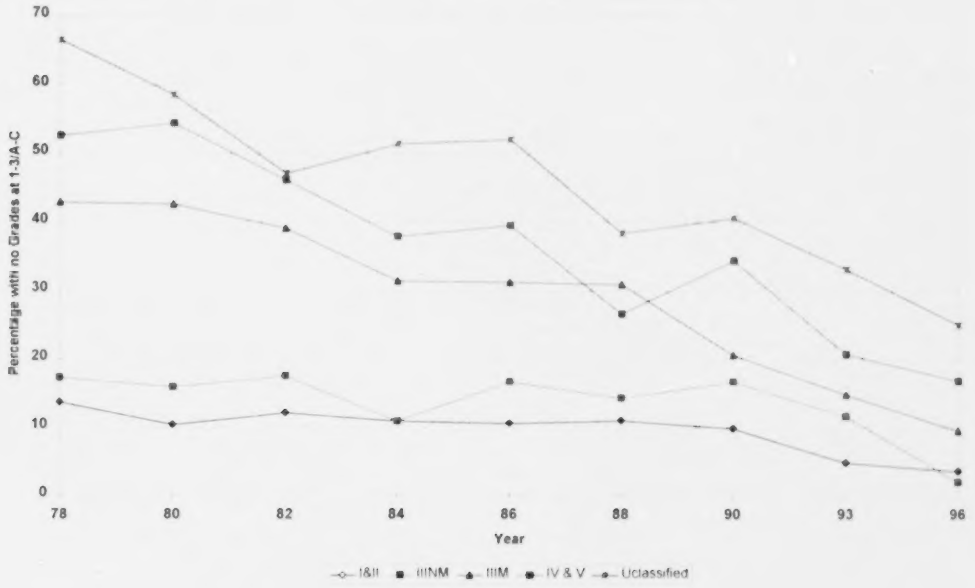

Figure 2.4: Females: Proportion of low attainers by father's social class

Among females (Figure 2.4), although starting from a similar position to the males in the late 1970's, by 1996 low attainment among the non-manual classes had all but disappeared. From the beginning of the 1990's low attainment among the IIIM class had also fallen sharply and begun to converge with the non-manual classes. Overall in terms of gender differences, compared to males there are fewer low attaining females across all the classes and female low attainment tends to be concentrated in the lowest social classes (IV & V and unclassified). For males there is a greater spread of low attainment across the social classes, and although class inequalities remain evident those among the non-manual classes represent a greater proportion of low attainers than is the case for females. Mac an Ghail (1994) in a study of males in the English Midlands identified a group of young middle class males who were disaffected from education. However, without further evidence in Scotland, it is not clear whether this explains gender differences in terms of the higher proportions of middle class young men who are low attainers. Nevertheless, the 1996 data shows that class differences in low attainment remain statistically significant for both males and females (Table not shown).

[1] Two-fifths of the unclassified group in the 1996 Cohort reported that their fathers were unemployed or sick/disabled.

In order to assess this apparent trend towards a narrowing of class inequalities further, odds ratios were calculated.[2] Odds ratios take account of the relative proportions of each class that are ***not*** low attainers, as the well as the proportion who are. They therefore provide a better assessment of the nature of inequality as they control for the overall decline that has occurred in low attainment over the years and changing patterns of social class composition. Table 2.1 gives the odds ratios for class inequalities in low attainment. It compares the ratio of low attainers to non-low attainers between the non-manual class and the rest. A fall in the odds ratios between years suggests a narrowing of inequality while an increase corresponds to widening inequality.

Table 2.1: Odds ratios: Father's occupation: non-manual vs manual/unclassified

	1978	1980	1982	1984	1986	1988	1990	1993	1996
Males	7.9	5.5	4.1	5.6	5.1	4.0	3.3	4.0	5.2
Females	6.2	7.5	4.6	5.4	5.1	3.7	3.3	4.2	6.6

Despite the apparent decline in inequalities in Figures 2.3 and 2.4, over the period in question for both males and females there is no consistent trend in terms of narrowing class inequalities in low attainment. For males, inequalities were widest at the beginning of the series in 1978 and although, with the exception of the mid-1980's, the trend has been broadly in a downward direction up until 1990, it has increased since. The picture for females is similar although the initial decline in inequality did not begin until 1980.

The second period of decline in low attainment (1984-1990) in the series was the subject of a previous more detailed study by Gamoran (1996) which examined the changing nature of inequalities with the introduction of Standard Grades. He concluded that the introduction of Standard Grades had resulted in a decline in inequality, especially as schools that were first to adopt Standard Grades tended to reduce inequality of attainment more quickly. However, this does not explain the subsequent rise in inequality in 1993 and 1996. Analyses of the individual odds on which the odds ratios are based showed that among the working class there has been a steady decline in the proportions of low attainers and that the fluctuations shown above are largely a reflection of swings in the middle class group. In particular, in 1996, there was a large fall in the odds of being low attainers among the middle classes. However, it is also important to remember that as the proportion of low attainers from all social classes becomes small, it is likely to become more prone to sampling variations between years.

Evidence from the England and Wales Youth Cohort Study highlighted widening class inequalities in attainment in recent years. Among those gaining 5+ good GCSE's, while pupils from managerial and professional backgrounds improved their position between 1996 and 1998, the proportion from unskilled manual backgrounds had fallen from 25 percent to

[2] The odds ratio were calculated as follows: If the numbers of working class low attainers and non-low attainers are a and b respectively, and the corresponding numbers for the middle class are c and d respectively, the odds ratio is the ratio between the two odds, $(a/b)/(c/d) = ad/bc$.

one in five over the same period (TES, 1999). Among low attainers in Scotland there is no evidence of any reversal of a reduction in low attainment among those from the most deprived backgrounds, but those from the middle classes have been showing a faster rate of improvement.

Parental education

The level of education among parents has also been highlighted as a good indicator of their offspring's educational success. Parents with good levels of education themselves are able to pass on their own educational capital to their children (Feinstein and Symons, 1997). Figure 2.5 shows the proportion of male low attainers according to the level of their parent's education.

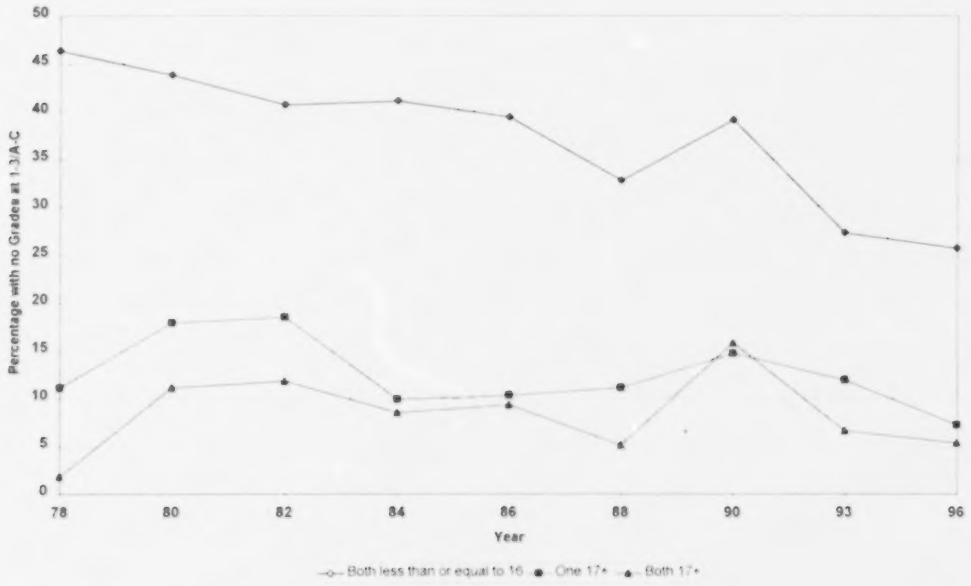

Figure 2.5: Males: Low attainment by parental education

In the late 1970's nearly half of the young people whose parents both left school at the minimum age, were in the low attainment group. But having one or both parents educated to at least the age of 17 seemed to provide a significant degree of protection against low attainment. Between 1978 and 1996 the rate of low attainment among those with parents educated to 17+ has been relatively stable, albeit at a low level. However, there was a sharp decline in low attainment among the young people whose parents have a low level of education themselves. This was true for both males and females (Figure 2.6). Although starting from a very similar position as males in the late 1970's, females with poorly educated parents appear to have made particular gains. By 1996, 26 percent of males with neither parent educated past the age of 16 were low attainers, whereas the comparable figure for females was only 15 percent.

In order to examine whether inequalities were narrowing in terms of low attainment and parental education, odds ratios were calculated. Table 2.2 shows the odds ratios across the

series and compares those with at least one parent who had been educated past the age of 17 with the others. Although inequalities for both sexes were at around their highest levels in 1978, as in the analysis of social class there was considerable variation across the years. For males inequality declined between 1978 and 1982, widened in 1984, before a stable period of decline up until 1993, before rising once again in 1996. Females followed a broadly similar pattern where the trend was one of narrowing inequalities between 1982 and 1993. Despite the steady reduction in low attainment among females with poorly educated parents noted above (Figure 2.6), females from better-educated family backgrounds had once again widened the gap in 1996.

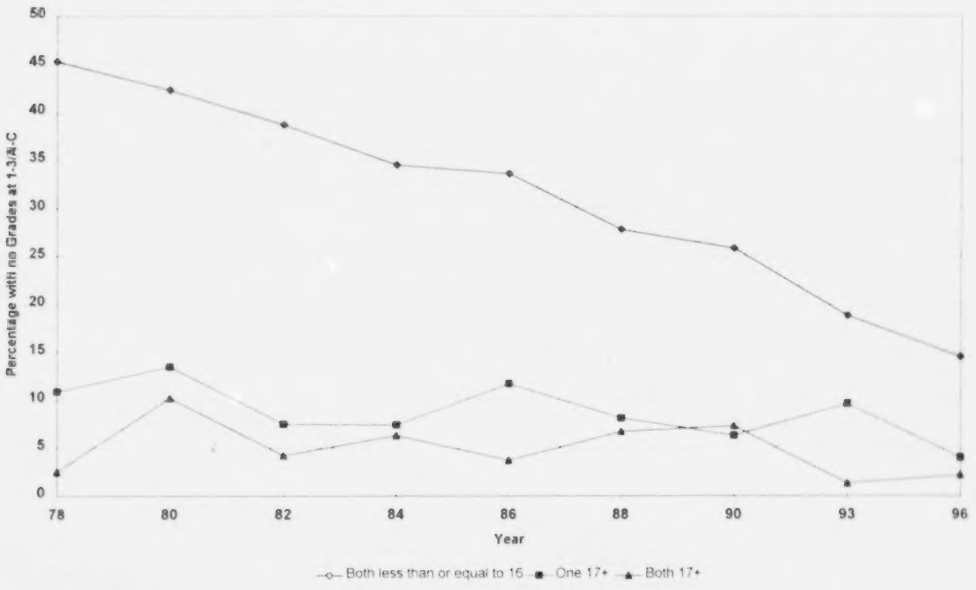

Figure 2.6: Females: Low attainment by parental education

Table 2.2: Odds ratios: Parental education: min-age/don't know vs one or both parents educated 17+

	1978	1980	1982	1984	1986	1988	1990	1993	1996
Males	10.8	4.1	3.6	7.0	6.5	5.4	3.6	3.4	5.0
Females	10.3	5.2	10.5	7.6	5.6	4.7	5.0	3.6	6.3

Summary

- Low attainment, according to our definition (no grades at 1-3/A-C), has fallen steadily since 1978 and in less than two decades has more than halved.
- While the proportions of low attaining males and females were broadly similar in 1978, female low attainment has declined at a faster rate compared to males. By 1996, 20 percent of males and only 12 percent of females were low attainers.
- Since the introduction of Standard Grades we have seen a particularly dramatic decline in the proportions achieving no awards whatsoever. This has fallen from around a third to 3 percent of males and 2 percent of females.

- Class and parental education remain important determinants of low attainment, with the majority of low attainers coming from manual or unclassified social class backgrounds, with parents who left school at the minimum age.
- Although the proportion of low attainers from the non-manual classes were small for both males and females, it was larger among males.
- While low attainment declined among all social classes, differences in the extent of inequality fluctuated over the period of our study. Inequalities narrowed from the mid 1980's up to 1990, but since then non-manual classes have pulled ahead and the gap widened once again.

Chapter 3

Characteristics of low attainers

This chapter examines a range of characteristics that are associated with low attainment, including individual factors, family, school and area effects. It is based on data from the 1996 Cohort to provide as up-to-date an assessment of the factors that are associated with low attainment as possible.

Individual factors

First of all we will consider a range of factors associated with young people themselves, such as their behaviour and attitudes, to ascertain how they are associated with low attainment. Young people have often been criticised for having poor attitudes towards education and some political commentators have claimed that young people's attitudes, especially among young males, are becoming increasingly anti-school. In many discussions the terms low attainment and disaffection go hand in hand and are used interchangeably, clearly placing the blame on the individual rather than on broader inequalities within society.

One factor that is often related to discussions of low attainment and disaffection with the education system is truancy. However, the relationship between truancy and low attainment is not unproblematic, as we cannot tell the direction of the relationship. For example, young people may become low attainers because they miss out on education due to the fact they are not at school, or they may truant by virtue of the fact that they are low attainers and do not see the relevance of their education.

Table 3.1: Extent of truancy by attainment group and gender

	Males		Females		Total	
	Not low Attainer	Low Attainer	Not low Attainer	Low Attainer	Not low Attainer	Low Attainer
Never	58	39	56	32	57	36
Lesson here and there	20	18	21	18	20	18
A day here and there	18	21	18	27	18	24
Several days at a time	3	13	4	11	4	12
Weeks at a time	2	9	1	12	1	10
(n)	2556	601	2771	375	5328	976
X^2		.000		.000		.000

Table 3.1 shows the extent of self-reported truancy broken down by attainment group and gender. Truancy is not uncommon among young people in Scotland, but most truancy is relatively infrequent, involving either a lesson or a day here and there. Comparing the situation in Scotland to the rest of Britain, data from the Youth Cohort Study (YCS) covering the same period suggests that truancy is less common in England and Wales. Overall just under half of young Scots truanted at some point during their S4 year (46%) while the

comparable figure for England and Wales was only two-fifths. Frequent truancy was also more common in Scotland: in England and Wales only two percent said they truanted for several days and a further two percent for several weeks at a time respectively (DfEE, 1997). While the comparable figures for Scotland were five and three percent.

There were significant differences in the rates of truancy both by attainment and gender. Female low attainers were more likely to truant than males, and low attainers of both sexes were more likely to truant when compared to their more qualified peers. Comparing the truancy rates between male and female low attainers, female low attainers were statistically more likely to truant ($p=.048$). Nearly two-thirds of low attainers have truanted at some point compared to less than half of the better qualified. The major difference between the qualification groups is the proportions that truant over an extended period. Low attainers of both sexes were four times as likely to have truanted for several days or weeks at time compared to the others. It is this group of around one in five low attainers who truanted for several days or weeks at a time which is likely to represent a group who are particularly disaffected and disengaged with education. However, it is important to highlight that a significant group of low attainers did not truant or did so infrequently.

Attitudes to school and teachers

Clearly our low attainers are more likely to truant than the better qualified, but to what extent does this represent an indication of a high level of disaffection from education? If our low attainers were highly disaffected by education we may expect this to show up in their attitudes towards education and teachers.

Table 3.2 shows the percentages agreeing with each of the statements about school and teachers. Females tended to express more positive attitudes than males and low attainers were less positive compared to the others. Whilst low attainers' responses were generally more negative, the differences between the attainment groups were not as wide as one might expect. Over two-thirds of low attainers felt school had given them confidence, taught them things that would be useful in a job and that their teachers had helped them do their best.

The widest discrepancies between the low attainment group and the others were in terms of: what school had done to prepare them for working life; the extent of perceived theft at the school; and the extent that pupils respected their teachers or their perceived ability to keep order in class. While the first item above suggests that some low attainers may see their education as unlikely to have much relevance to their future working lives, the others tend to be more general comments about the school and teachers rather than highlighting a particularly strong negative disposition towards education *per se*.

Peer group cultures have frequently been highlighted as contributing towards differentiation in attainment; in particular how gendered identities manifest themselves within the school. There is evidence that young women's attitudes have changed fundamentally in terms of how they value work and family life and that working class young women no longer wish to

follow their mothers' footsteps into factory or office work (Arnot *et al.*, 1998). Whilst there is also evidence that male sub-cultures within the school are changing (Mac an Ghail, 1994), among certain groups of young men a macho culture with little regard for education was found to remain.

Males were less likely to agree that their friends took school seriously in S4 than was the case for females and low attainers of both sexes were significantly less likely to agree compared to their better-qualified peers. The differences, however, were wider between attainment groups than between gender and although females in both attainment groups were more likely to say their friends took school seriously, the gap between the two groups of females was wider than was the case for males.

Table 3.2: Young people's attitudes to school and teachers

Percent agreeing with each of the following statements about school

	Males		Females		Total	
	Not low Attainer	Low Attainer	Not low Attainer	Low Attainer	Not low Attainer	Low Attainer
School has helped to give me confidence to make decisions	70	64	71	66	71	65
School has done little to prepare me for life when I leave school	30	46	30	44	30	45
School has taught me things which would be useful in a job	77	67	76	64	76	66
My school dealt well with any bullying that went on	61	57	61	61	61	59
There was vandalism at my school during the school day	60	66	56	60	58	64
Theft among pupils was common at my school	31	48	26	46	28	47
My school dealt well with any harassment that went on	64	64	66	60	65	62
Pupils sometimes got bullied	85	84	91	90	88	86
Pupils sometimes got harassed	82	87	83	85	83	86
My friends took school seriously in S4	48	39	53	42	51	40
Attitudes to teachers:						
If I had a problem there was always a teacher I could talk to	64	58	68	63	66	60
Pupils respected the teachers	44	29	48	30	46	29
My teachers helped me do my best	76	66	79	70	77	68
Pupils who were punished usually deserved it	74	63	80	68	77	65
Many teachers could not keep order in class	47	61	41	60	44	60

Family factors

We highlighted the influence of social class and parental education on low attainment in Chapter 2 using the trend data. However, the most recent SSLS survey allows us to examine a number of additional factors related to family background. This included the extent of parental encouragement provided to young people and whether a range of potential educational resources were provided within the home.

Parental encouragement

In Chapter 2 we highlighted the relationship between parental educational and attainment, where low attainers were more likely to come from backgrounds where their parents had only been educated to the minimum age. We might expect our low attainment group to have received less parental encouragement than their better attaining peers. Parents who left school at the minimum age may perceive that their own lack of education had not had negative consequences or alternatively feel that what education they had received had proved of little relevance for their own working lives.

Table 3.3 shows the percentage of young people reporting that their parents ***never*** did any of a range of statements, which are related to school and family life.

Table 3.3: Parental encouragement

Percent reporting parents never did any of the following

	Males		Females		Total	
	Not low Attainer	Low Attainer	Not low Attainer	Low Attainer	Not low Attainer	Low Attainer
Check if you had done homework	13	15	16	21	15	17
Expect chores to be done around the home	10	19	7	14	9	17
Limit time for going out at nights	23	25	17	29	20	27
Talk about day's events at school	13	18	12	27	13	21
Urge to earn money	30	34	34	39	32	36
Encourage in own plans and hopes	7	10	6	15	6	12
Urge to do best at school	2	3	2	4	2	3
Discuss career plans	6	9	7	15	6	12

The vast majority of parents appear to urge their children to do their best at school. Few of either attainment group report that their parents never urged them to do their best and the overall differences between the groups were small at just over one percent.

Although the parents of low attaining males were less likely to provide encouragement, to talk about school and future plans, to check on homework or to put restrictions on going out,

the differences between attainment groups were only in the region of 3 to 5 percent. On the other hand, the differences between the females were much larger. Not only were low attaining females less likely to receive encouragement than similarly qualified males, but they were more than twice as likely as better qualified females to report that their parents never encouraged them, discussed their future plans or talked about school.

We might expect parents to place more restrictions on daughters rather than sons going out at night due to fears over their safety. While this is certainly true among our better-qualified group, the reverse is true for low attainers where low attaining females appear to have even fewer restrictions placed upon them compared to poorly qualified males.

A number of concerns have also been expressed about young people from low-income families being encouraged to take up part-time jobs in order to supplement the family income. In particular, early morning paper or milk rounds have been seen as particularly detrimental to school life, with the potential to cause tiredness during the school day. Contrary to these expectations, our low attainers were less likely to be urged by their parents to earn money. In fact, low attainers were also much less likely to have had to contribute to the family in kind in the form of doing chores around the house.

Resources within the home

The extent of educational resources that are provided within the home may also have an effect on attainment. Earlier studies into attainment have suggested that the resources within the home may have an impact. In particular, young people's access to a quiet room in which to study or do homework, may have an effect on their education outside school.

Table 3.4: Resources within the home

Percent with the following resources within the home

	Males		Females		Total	
	Not low Attainer	Low Attainer	Not low Attainer	Low Attainer	Not low Attainer	Low Attainer
Computer with CD	34	20	25	13	29	17
Computer No CD	39	34	37	24	38	30
Computer Game	74	83	61	65	67	76
Room of own	83	75	84	73	83	74
Good place to study	86	79	82	72	84	77
Video recorder	92	85	92	78	92	82
Dictionary	94	80	96	80	95	80

Considering the resources within the family home, with the exception of owning a computer game, low attainers of both sexes were less likely to have access to the range of resources listed than their better-qualified peers. Overall males were more likely to have access to a computer than females, but the differences were wider between attainment groups for both sexes, than across them. Most of these differences are likely to be a reflection of the social

class composition and differential financial resources within the families of the two attainment groups. The vast majority of low attainers, however, had either a room of their own, or a good place to study within the home.

We examined a range of factors that may be related to low attainment, and not only have we found considerable differences between attainment groups of both sexes, there also appears to be clear differences in terms of gender within the low attainment group. A possible explanation may be in terms of the class composition of the two low attainment groups. In Chapter 2 we reported that low attaining females were less likely to belong to non-manual classes compared to the males. To assess whether the reported differences was due to the different class composition, the tables above were re-run excluding males and females from non-manual backgrounds (tables not shown). This had little impact on the results, and fails to provide an adequate explanation of the gender differences reported above.

Area

In a previous Scottish study Garner (1989) found that neighbourhood deprivation had an impact on attainment. Her study found that among young people with otherwise comparable characteristics, neighbourhood deprivation could effect O Grade attainment by between two and four grades. In this study in order to consider neighbourhood deprivation we matched Carstairs scores to the postcode sector of each person in the sample for which we had post code data, using the mapping developed by McLoone (1995). The scores were then divided into quartiles based on the entire sample, the results of which are reported in Table 3.5.

Table 3.5: Home-area deprivation

Percentage of low attainers by deprivation of postcode sector (Quartiles)

	Males		Females		Total	
	Not low Attainer	Low Attainer	Not low Attainer	Low Attainer	Not low Attainer	Low Attainer
Most Affluent	29	13	27	9	28	11
Next most Affluent	28	15	27	15	27	15
Next Most Deprived	24	28	24	30	24	29
Most Deprived	20	44	22	47	21	45
(n)	(2382)	(573)	(2586)	(355)	(4965)	(927)
X^2		.0000		.0000		.0000

We found a clear relationship between postcode deprivation and low attainment. Nearly three-quarters of all low attainers were concentrated within the two most deprived quartiles, clearly highlighting a strong link between deprivation and low attainment.

We also considered whether low attainers were more likely to live in large urban areas compared to rural areas. Table 3.6 shows the proportions of low attainers according to the population density of the area they lived in. Around half of low attainers were found to live in

cities or large towns. Although this is perhaps not surprising, as a high proportion of the overall Scottish population is concentrated in urban areas, the proportions of low attainers within urban areas exceeded their proportion of the overall population.

Table 3.6: Population density

Percentage of low attainers by population density associated with home address

	Males		Females		Total	
	Not low Attainer	Low Attainer	Not low Attainer	Low Attainer	Not low Attainer	Low Attainer
1,000,000 persons or more	17	32	18	30	18	31
100,000 - 999,999 persons	17	17	18	23	17	19
10,000 - 99,999 persons	30	27	29	24	29	26
1,000-9,999 persons	21	17	20	17	21	17
Under 1,000 persons	15	8	15	6	15	7
(n)	(2131)	(468)	(2348)	(307)	(4477)	(776)
X^2		.0000		.0000		.0000

Predicting the range of factors associated with low attainment

We have established that a number of factors appear to be related with low attainment, but in order to assess which factors best predict low attainment it is necessary to consider them all together in one statistical model. To do this a multilevel model was run considering the range of factors that may be associated with low attainment. A multilevel model has the advantage over traditional statistical techniques by allowing us to include school level variation in the model. The variables were added into the model in a series of steps and the significant variables included in the final model are shown below (Coefficients and Standard Errors are provided in Appendix 2).

		Males	Females
Father's Social Class	manual	+	+
	unclassified	+	+
Parental Education	one 17+	ns	ns
	both min age	+	ns
Housing Type	council/other	+	+
Area Deprivation	next affluent	ns	ns
	next deprived	ns	+
	most deprived	+	+
No of siblings	one	ns	+
	2	ns	+
	3+	ns	+
Attitude to teachers		ns	-
Between school Variance		significant p<0.001	significant p=0.049

Reference categories: Father's Social Class – Non-manual; Parental Education-Both educated to 17+; Housing Type-Owner Occupied, Deprivation-Most Affluent Quartile; Number of Siblings-Only child.

Figure 3.1: Multilevel model predicting low attainment

For males Father's social class, the level of parental education, housing type and deprivation were the most significant predictors of low attainment. With the exception of parental education these factors were also significant for females although they worked in slightly different ways. In addition to these factors, family size was significant for females and so were their attitudes to teachers.

We explored the relationship between truancy and low attainment, and found that it had a significant association with low attainment after taking account of measures of social class, parents' education, housing type and deprivation. However, we did not include truancy in the final model (Figure 3.1) because it is not clear whether truancy is a cause or effect of low attainment.

It is worth commenting on the non-significant variables in the model. Once social class and parental education had been taken into account, coming from a single parent family, compared to living with two parents, did not significantly increase the chances of being a low attainer. Similarly, levels of parental encouragement did not make a significant difference to the attainment of males or females when other factors were taken into account. Although parental education was initially significant for females, once the model took account of whether or not the parents were owner-occupiers, the variable was no longer significant. For males, on the other hand, having both parents educated to the minimum-age remained significant, but there were no significant advantages between having two well-educated parents compared to only one. Once family background factors had been taken account of, young people's attitudes to school, their teachers or whether or not their friends took school seriously were not good predictors of low attainment among males. Among females on the other hand negative attitudes towards the teachers were associated with low attainment.

Compared to being an only child, females with one or more siblings are more likely to become low attainers and this is especially the case with those who have 3+ siblings. Studies in the US have frequently highlighted the salience of family size in predicting attainment and some have argued it is of considerable importance, sometimes on the same level of parents' socio-economic status. (Blake, 1989). This has been generally attributed to a dilution of resources in larger families and the quality of parents' interaction. While gender differences in sibling size have not been highlighted as significant, Walldén (1992), using Swedish data found that girls were more favoured than boys by being only children in terms of gaining a high-school education.

We described earlier the significant relationship between low attainment and the population density of the area in which the young person lived; with low attainers more likely to live in large cities (Table 3.6 above). However, once we have taken account of deprivation and other background factors, whether a person lives in a city or non-city area is no longer significant.

Overall then, male low attainers are most likely to come from an unclassified social class background, with both parents educated to the minimum age, and to live in council or other rented accommodation within the most deprived areas. Low attaining females are also most

likely to come from unclassified social backgrounds, to live in large families in council or rented accommodation, in deprived areas but in addition to hold negative attitudes towards the teachers. For both males and females the particular school they attend is also an important factor.

Summary

- Truancy and negative attitudes towards school and their teachers were more common among low attainers. However, the causal direction of the relationships between truancy, attitudes and attainment is uncertain.
- Males overall were more negative in their attitudes towards school and the teachers than females, although the gap between low attaining females and their better-qualified peers was wider than for males.
- Overall levels of parental encouragement were high for all pupils regardless of attainment levels. However, low attaining females were less likely to receive encouragement than similarly qualified males, and they were more than twice as likely as better qualified females to report that their parents never encouraged them, discussed their future plans or talked about school.
- The main predictors of low attainment, were an 'unclassified' social class background, living in council or rented accommodation within the most deprived neighbourhoods. For males low attainment was further predicted by having poorly educated parents. Each of these factors was individually correlated with low attainment and in this respect disadvantage tended to be cumulative.
- Family size was an additional predictor for females, but not for males. Females with no siblings were less likely to be low attainers than females from larger families.
- After controlling for the other background factors, the attitudes of girls towards their teachers were a further predictor of their attainment, although this was not the case for boys.
- Even after controlling for these individual, family and neighbourhood factors, there was variation between schools. Therefore some schools appear to perform better or worse than others in reducing low attainment.

Chapter 4

The early destinations of low attaining S4 leavers

This chapter examines what happens to low attainers who leave school at the end of S4. It examines the range of routes they initially follow on leaving school after S4 and how this has changed over time.

Trend in first destinations

Figure 4.1 shows the early destinations of low attaining males who left S4 from the late 1970's until 1993. Comparable data for females is provided in Figure 4.2.

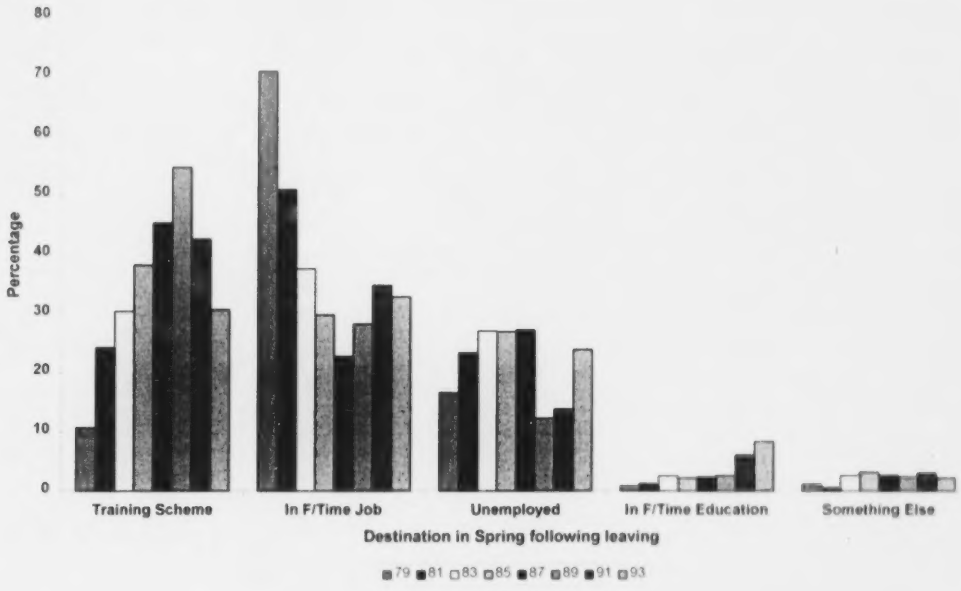

Figure 4.1: Males: Early destinations of low attaining S4 leavers

It is perhaps worthwhile highlighting some of the broader changes that have taken place and the significant policy interventions, which have occurred over the period in question. British youth researchers have documented the collapse of the youth labour market since the mid-1970's, a process that was accelerated by the recessions which tended to affect young people disproportionately severely.

We can see that over the period there has been a sharp decline among low attaining S4 leavers entering full-time employment (Figures 4.1 and 4.2), which fell to an all time low at the height of the recession in 1986. The trend in terms of those entering a full-time job closely follows the pattern of the overall national economy and largely mirrors the trend in adult unemployment. The adult claimant count accelerated sharply in the early to mid 1980's to a peak of 13.5 percent in 1986, it then declined sharply until 1990, rose gradually during the 1990's recession, and since 1993 has been in decline (Scottish Office, 1998). During periods of economic recovery young low attainers have not experienced the same degree of

improvement in unemployment as the overall adult population. Whereas over two-thirds of low attaining S4 leavers entered full-time employment in the late 1970's, the comparable figure for 1993 is around a third.

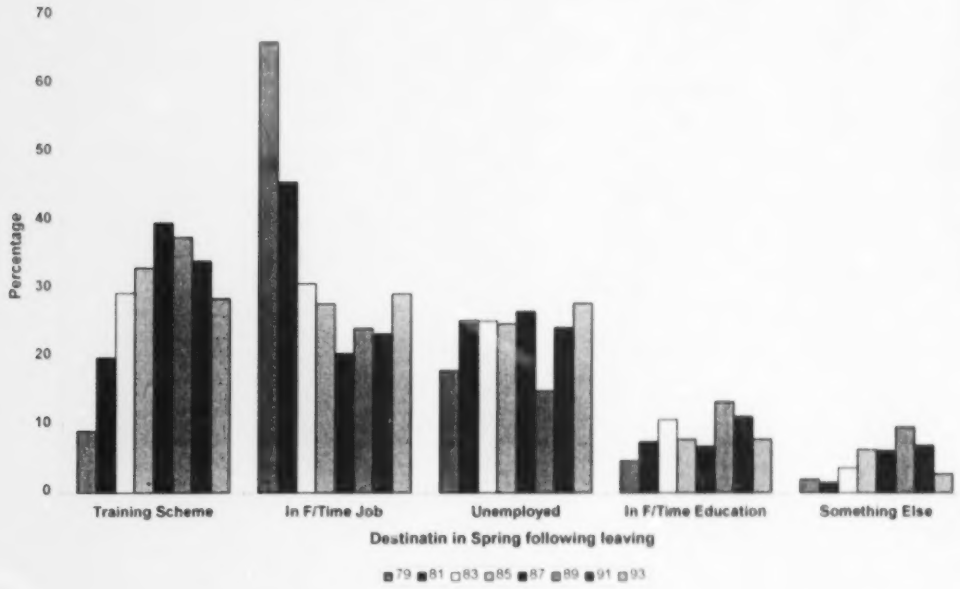

Figure 4.2: Females: Early destinations of low attaining S4 leavers

Unemployment rates among low attainers increased from the late 1970's, but stabilised between the early and mid 1980's. In 1988 with the withdrawal of unemployment benefits from 16 and 17 year olds, there was unsurprisingly a sharp fall in the numbers recorded as unemployed. Nevertheless in 1988 over one in ten low attainers recorded a destination of unemployment, and the initial effects of removing benefits appear short lived. Unemployment rates increased again in subsequent years and by 1992 had reached a similar level to that experienced during the height of the 1980's recession. While this appears to be a worrying trend, data is not available for us to assess whether this represents low attainers' rejection of the 'training guarantee' and a subsequent withdrawal from the education and training system, or a reflection of an increasing proportion having difficulties in accessing training places.

The sharp decline in employment was largely offset by increased participation in training schemes. In 1978 when the Youth Opportunities Programme (YOP) was introduced, training programmes only catered for around one in ten of the low attainment group. At that stage, although unemployment had already begun to rise from the mid-1970's, employment opportunities were still relatively buoyant for minimum aged school leavers. Since then, participation in training rose sharply to a peak in 1988 when it catered for around half of the low attaining S4 leavers, before a subsequent decline. During this period training provision went through a number of transformations. Youth Opportunities Programme (YOP) had provided a period of work experience for the young unemployed but subsequent measures attempted to create a training route. This was initially done with introduction of the one year

Youth Training Scheme (YTS) in 1983 which was extended to a two year programme in 1986 and changed to Youth Training (YT) in 1990.

Research conducted during the 1980's highlighted variation in training quality and led some commentators to argue it was the context in which training took place which was more important rather than the content (Bynner and Roberts, 1991). The research also highlighted that young people themselves were highly critical of the schemes, criticising what they perceived as its slave labour qualities. Subsequent programmes struggled to shake off the focus of earlier programmes as schemes for the unemployed rather than providing worthwhile training. Few young people were found to be attracted to training *per se* and have tended to perceive youth training as a scheme for those who could not get anything else. From the low attainers destination data, participation in training appears to be largely a reflection of the state of the economy and unemployment rates, rather than reflecting an increase in popularity as successive training programmes were introduced. This is true for our low attainment group, where participation in training appears to closely follow the economic cycle. This suggests that at least among our low attainers, employment has been the preferred option over training.

In Scotland, further attempts have been made to improve training with the phasing in of the 'Skillseekers' programme (including Modern Apprenticeships) from 1991, becoming a national programme by 1995. There is at least some evidence emerging that both employers and young people who participate in Skillseekers have become more favourably disposed towards it. Compared to previous programmes, increasing proportions of participants also have employed status (Scottish Enterprise, 1998). While the latest developments in training may help to attract those with slightly better qualifications into work based training, the extent it will help those in the lowest attainment bands is unclear. There has been a tendency in the past for those with better qualifications to cream off the best training places.

Gender differences in early destinations

While the above discussion has focused on the general patterns of early destinations, there are important differences between the sexes. Overall these can be summarised as higher participation in training and employment among the males, with females more likely to participate in Further Education, to be unemployed or to be doing 'something else'. Although this general pattern was broadly similar for males and females across the period, at least up until 1986, further differences can be highlighted.

For males, the abolition of unemployment benefits in 1988 appears to have boosted participation in training, at least in the short-term, but for females it seems to have increased participation in Further Education sharply. As noted earlier, the reduction in unemployment achieved by this measure appears to have been short-lived. For females by 1990, unemployment had already risen sharply and by 1992 it was at the highest level recorded across the entire period. Unemployment among males however did not rise so fast, remaining

relatively stable between 1988 and 1990 before rising steeply in 1992. Although this subsequent increase in male unemployment may be partly attributed the early 1990's recession, this does not explain the rise in female unemployment in 1990, when the overall unemployment rates were at one of their lowest levels for over a decade. In addition there was a corresponding fall in participation in training, rather than employment, which seems to undermine the argument that this was due to recessionary pressures on the youth labour market.

An explanation in terms of training appears more convincing. But whether this was to do with increasing difficulties in accessing training places or the popularity of training reaching an all time low among young people, or some form of combination of the two remains unclear. Certainly there is some indication that increasing numbers of males were choosing to enter Further Education, although the opposite was true for females where FE witnessed small but significant declines after 1990. We also know from other studies that females enter a more limited range of training opportunities and that they are more likely to be on bridging allowances.

More recent data on the early destinations of S4 leavers is available through the 1996 cohort. Unfortunately, however, there are a number of problems with the destination data[1] and the change of survey design from a leavers survey to a cohort survey means the results are not directly comparable with Figures 4.1 and 4.2 presented above. As a result, some form of bias is likely to have been introduced into the results and caution needs to be taken in their interpretation. We would not recommend further reporting of the figures presented without qualification. Nevertheless, it was felt worthwhile to present the destination data for the 1996 cohort, to provide a more up-to-date estimate of the early destinations of low attainers.

From the data presented here, there is little indication that Skillseekers, a year after it had become a nationwide programme, had significantly reversed the decline in participation in training among the low attainment group. However, the data suggests that the vast majority of our low attainment group found Skillseekers placements with employers. Eighty-two percent of males and seventy-nine percent of females among low attainers on Skillseekers had employed status (Table not shown). While this is true for both sexes, participation in training remained significantly lower among females, although they were more likely to enter other forms of full-time employment without training. We do not have data on participation in Modern Apprenticeships but it is unlikely, by virtue of their low attainment, that a significant proportion would enter MA schemes.

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[1] Due to teething problems with the change of the survey design in 1996, the destination data is incomplete. A split questionnaire design was introduced with those remaining at school receiving a different version from those who left school. The information on whether a young person had remained at school was collected from individual schools and this information proved unreliable and, in addition, no information was collected on the destinations of S5 winter leavers. As a result, destination data is unavailable for over a quarter of the low attaining S4 leavers in the sample, and for most of the S5 winter leavers. As the characteristics of low attainers who were expected by their school to continue into S5 are likely to be different to those expected to leave, this is likely to introduce some form of bias into the results

Table 4.1: Spring 1997 destinations of low attainers in S4 in 1995-96

	Males	Females
	%	%
Employed in job including Skillseekers	25	14
Employed in a job not including Skillseekers	29	36
On Skillseekers training	6	4
Out of work and looking for a job	20	25
Full-time at College	12	9
Looking after the home or family	1	7
Self-employed	6	-
Something else	2	5
(n)	(250)	(130)

A sizeable minority, consisting of one in five males and a quarter of females, were unemployed approximately one year after leaving school. As unemployment is technically no longer an option for this age group, this may represent a continuing area of concern. However, once again we are unable to assess what proportion of the unemployed are on bridging allowances, (waiting to access training places or between placements), or whether they have already dropped-out of training or have never entered the education and training system at all.

Males appear to have overtaken females in participation in Further Education. However, due to relatively small sample sizes and the lack of destination data for a group who may be more likely to choose an education option, this picture may be misleading without further evidence confirming this trend.

Summary

- The most significant trend across the period is the substantial fall in the number of low attaining young people entering employment after leaving S4. Whereas among 1978 leavers 71 percent of males and 66 percent of females had a destination of full-time employment in the spring after leaving school by 1993 this had fallen to 33 percent and 29 cent respectively.
- Declining employment opportunities have largely been offset by participation in training.
- Participation in training peaked for males in 1988 (55%) and for females in 1986 (40%), but since then has been in decline.
- Despite numerous changes to training programmes designed to increase their popularity, participation in training has tended to follow the economic cycle.
- Although females were less likely to participate in training than males, more females entered Further Education, but in recent years participation in FE appears to be on the increase among the males
- Despite the changes in benefit rules since 1988, when 16 and 17 year-olds were no longer able to claim benefits, a significant proportion of males and females continue to record a destination of unemployment.

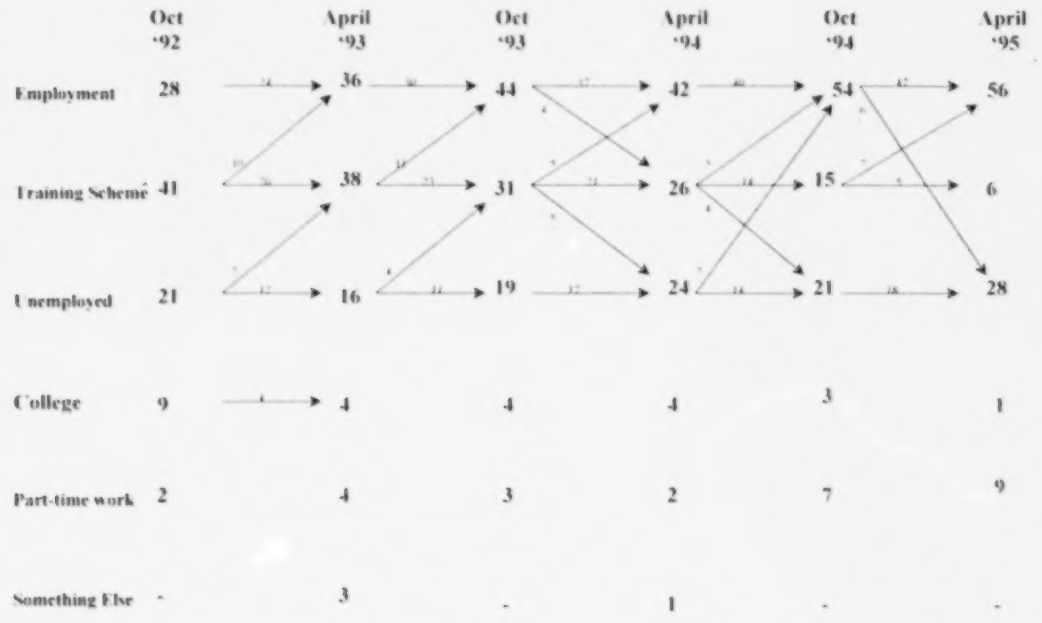
Chapter 5

Low attaining S4 leavers' routes into and within the labour market

The Reconstructed Cohort provides the most recent data available that allows us to document the routes followed by low attaining S4 leavers up to three years after leaving school. The analysis is based on the S4 leavers who left school in May 1992 who were followed up in the spring of 1995 at age 18/19.

A number of earlier studies in the 1980's examined the labour market routes of early school leavers in Scotland using SYPS data (Furlong *et al.*, 1990; Furlong and Raffe, 1989). In recent years, however, there has been a lack of research focusing on the labour market and none that we are aware of which specifically focuses on the low attainment group.

Figure 5.1 gives an overview of the routes low attaining male S4 leavers took after leaving school up until around the age of 18/19. The larger figures represent percentages in each of the statuses at 6 monthly intervals after leaving school. The smaller figures show the major transitions between statuses; they show the percentage of all low-attaining males making this transition, whenever this is at least 4 percent.



NB: Changes of less than 4% not shown

Figure 5.1: The post-school transitions of low attaining males between 16 and 19

The first recorded destination for low attaining males is in October 1992 (4-5 months after most of the S4 leavers left school). Training is the most commonly entered status, entered by

two-fifths, followed by just over a quarter who entered full-time employment and another fifth who were unemployed.

As time progresses, we see a significant group of low attaining males prematurely moving out of training. However, on the positive side most of those who left training went into full-time work, and there was a corresponding shift among those who were initially unemployed into training. By the age of 18/19, approximately 3 years after leaving school, we see that more than half of low attaining young males were in full-time employment with just over a quarter unemployed.

The picture for low attaining females is even more complex and the outcomes less positive (Figure 5.2). Although two-fifths of females were in employment approximately 6 months after leaving school, only one in ten was in training, and a quarter were unemployed. Unlike the males, however, who gradually found their way into employment, the tendency among low attaining females was to move out of employment and either to enter training at a later stage or alternatively become unemployed. By the age of 18/19 only around one-third of females were in full-time employment, with over two-fifths unemployed. In addition, we witness a movement from unemployment to 'something else' that was not evident among the males. When we investigated the 'something else' group further we found that approximately 80 percent at age 18/19 (April 1995) had children and the vast majority were either married or living with a partner (Table in Appendix 3).

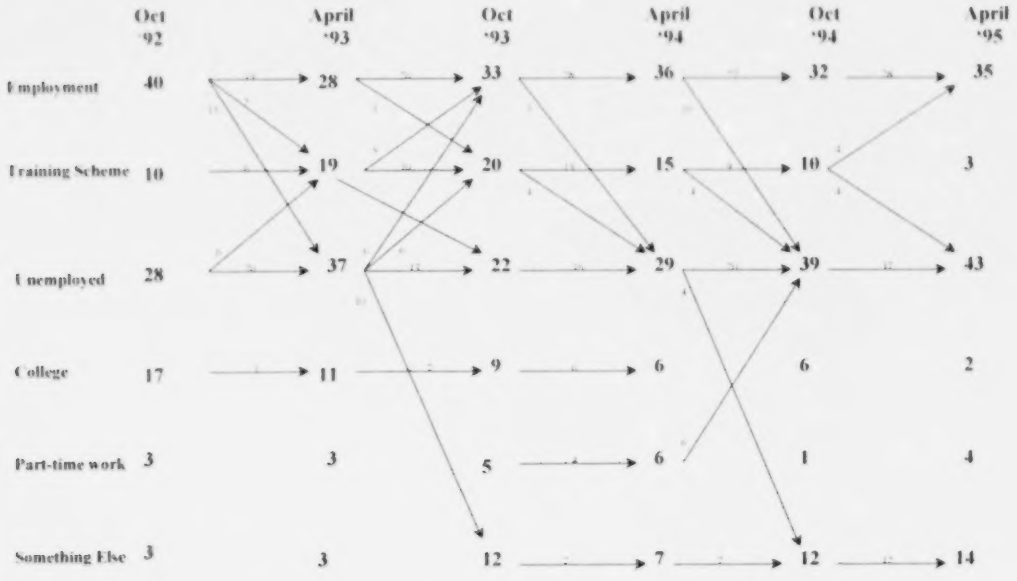

Oct '92
April '93
Oct '93
April '94
Oct '94
April '95
Employment 40 28 33 36 32 35
Training Scheme 10 19 20 15 10 3
Unemployed 28 37 22 29 39 43
College 17 11 9 6 6 2
Part-time work 3 3 5 6 1 4
Something Else 3 3 12 7 12 14

Figure 5.2: The post-school transitions of low attaining females between 16 and 19

Whilst these figures show that there is considerable movement between statuses in the three years after leaving school as young people try and find their way in the labour market, our data only presents part of the picture. The data does not capture changes that occur outside of the six monthly snapshots and also conceals movement within statuses. We know that young people frequently move from one training placement to another and there will also be movement within employment as young people switch between jobs.

Complexity of routes

On a theoretical level a great deal of attention has recently been given in the British transitions literature to the way the transition process has been changing and becoming more individualised and complex, but there has been limited research conducted so far to support this. Roberts (1995) has argued that theoretical advances in the area of youth transitions have led to a situation where theory outdistances the empirical evidence. The national school leavers surveys have failed to keep pace with the increasingly protracted nature of young people's transitions, but a 22/23-year-old follow-up of a Scottish SSLS cohort was carried out for the first time in 1999, so future analyses will be able to observe transition over a longer period.

British youth researchers in the past used the term trajectory to describe young people's routes into the labour market. However, it is increasingly argued that the term is becoming less appropriate to young people's transition behaviours in the 1990's. As routes have become more protracted and complex and terms like 'yo-yo transitions', 'navigations' and 'biographies' are seen more appropriate in the 1990's (Evans and Furlong, 1997). While this complexity of transitions is seen as applicable to all young people, regardless of their attainment, previous research has shown that those at the bottom end of the labour market are most vulnerable to instability. The study by Ashton *et al* (1990) 'Young Adults into the Labour Market' which traced the career paths of 18 to 24 year-olds in late 1980's, found relative stability among most sectors of the youth labour market in their early careers. Where instability was found it was at the bottom end of the youth labour market. Here many young people's early careers were characterised by a series of shifts between government training schemes, semi and unskilled work punctuated by periods of unemployment.

Table 5.1: S4 leavers and the number of recorded changes in status between leaving S4 and age 18/19

	Males		Females	
	Low Attainers	All S4 Leavers[1]	Low Attainers	All S4 Leavers
	%	%	%	%
No changes in status	24	31	21	18
One Change	36	35	32	35
Two Changes	23	19	19	24
Three Changes	14	11	19	18
Four Changes	4	3	5	3
Five Changes	-	-	5	2
(n)	(347)	(697)	(220)	(496)

[1] The figure for all S4 leavers includes low attainers.

Figures 5.1 and 5.2 presented above, although far from providing the full picture, highlight some of the complexity of the transitions among low attaining young people who leave school at the minimum age. In order to examine the complexity of routes further, we calculated the number of changes young S4 leavers had made across the six monthly snapshots between leaving school in 1992 and April 1995, up to a maximum number of five possible changes across the period.

Table 5.2: Young people leaving S4 and their first recorded change of status, between leaving school in 1992 and April 1995

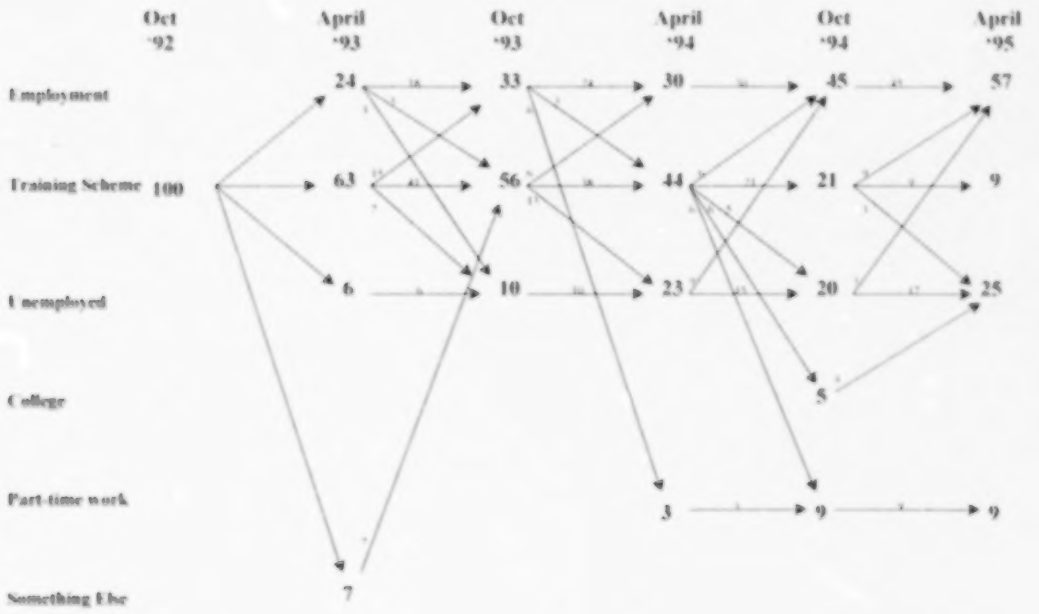
	Male		Female	
	Low Attainers	All S4 Leavers	Low Attainers	All S4 Leavers
Continuously in F/T Employment	13	22	13	13
F/T Employment to YT	4	3	7	6
F/T Work to Unemployment	7	6	20	12
F/T Work to Other	2	1	3	3
Continuous YT	4	3	2	1
YT to F/T Employment	23	21	5	14
YT to Unemployment	9	7	5	6
YT to Other	6	5	-	3
Continuously Unemployed	6	5	7	3
Unemployed to F/T Work	5	3	5	3
Unemployed to YT	7	6	6	3
Unemployed to Other	4	3	9	7
Continuously in Education	-	1	2	3
Education to F/T Employment	3	6	5	9
Education to YT	3	3	5	5
Education to Unemployment	3	3	1	5
Education to Other	-	1	1	-
Something Else	2	2	5	4
(n)	(313)	(640)	(188)	(419)

As we can see from Table 5.1 many young S4 leavers made a considerable number of changes across the period. Low attainers were more likely to make more frequent changes compared to all S4 leavers and there were considerable differences between the sexes. Twenty-nine percent of low attaining females made 3 or more status changes, compared to 23 percent among all female S4 leavers. For males the proportions making 3 or more changes were eighteen and fourteen percent, respectively. This highlights the considerable instability among a significant proportion of young people's early careers in the labour market, but especially among young women. Males on the other hand were more likely to have made no changes in status. While this may represent stability, it is necessary to consider what this apparent stability represents. Table 5.2 shows the first recorded change from one status to another. We can see that over a fifth of male S4 leavers remain continually employed across the period, while the comparable figure for low attaining males, and all female S4 leavers regardless of attainment is only 13 percent. On the other hand we see a group of around one in twenty males who are continuously unemployed. While the percentage of low attaining females who were continuously unemployed is slightly higher (7%), overall among all the

females it came to only 3 percent. However, females are over-represented in the category of doing 'something else' and we know that many within this category are also likely to have withdrawn from the labour market.

Training routes

Figures 5.1 and 5.2 highlighted the considerable early movement out of training among all low attaining S4 leavers. It is also possible to examine the subsequent routes followed by males who initially entered training. It is not possible to do this for females due to the relatively small numbers of females entering training.



NB: Too small cell sizes for females

Figure 5.3: Outputs from YT: Routes within the labour market of low-attaining males leaving after S4 whose first destination was YT

The trend data in Chapter 4 shows that participation in youth training in Scotland peaked in the late 1980's among low attainers and since then, at least up to the mid 1990's, has been in decline. With the collapse of the youth labour market, training became a principal route for many early school leavers and, although it subsequently declined, a significant proportion of early school leavers still experience youth training at some point in their early careers.

Figure 5.3 shows the subsequent routes of low attaining males who were in training in the October after S4. By the following April, less than one year after entering training, we find that over a third of low attaining males had already left training. Most of those who left entered full-time employment although 6 percent became unemployed. Over time we witness further decreases in participation in training, although rather than entering employment an

increasing proportion became unemployed. We also witness a small proportion of those who leave training for full-time work re-entering training at a later stage. When we examined the routes followed by the entire group of low attaining males (Figure 5.1, above) we witnessed movement from the unemployed group into training. However, among those who initially entered training, and then became unemployed, this movement from unemployment back into training was not evident. This suggests that those who had prior experience of training and who subsequently became unemployed were unlikely to re-enter training at a later stage.

As the training normally lasts for a period of two years, the vast majority of trainees might have been expected to complete their training between April 1994 and October 1994. However by April 1994, well over half the trainees had already left training entirely and among those who remained, a further proportion left the programme at some point to return at a later date. Although we see a significant movement out of training at the time of expected completion (April - October 1994), nearly half of those who were in training in October 1994 were still in training in April 1995. This suggests that a sizeable proportion of those who initially entered training on leaving school were still in training more than two years on. While this is partly a reflection of those re-entering training from other statuses, it also points to considerable movement from one training programme to another, which is not captured within the data.

Among those who left training around the time of expected completion (April - October 1994) roughly equal proportions entered full-time work, part-time work, college and unemployment. While we were surprised by the fact that nearly one in ten low attaining males leaving training entered part-time work, this may be a reflection of wider labour market trends and opportunities reported elsewhere, where male adult part-time work is on the increase.

Table 5.3: Male S4 leavers whose first destination was YT and whether they remained on YT for the next 18 months.

	Consecutively on YT	Didn't remain on YT	(n)
	%	%	
No SG passes	38	62	(34)
SG passes at 4-7 only	44	56	(96)
1 or 2 passes at 1-3	48	52	(64)
3 or more passes at 1-3	61	40	(24)

NB: sample sizes too small for females

As there is clearly a high degree of non-completion of training schemes among our low attaining S4 leavers, we decided to investigate the relationship between non-completion and attainment further. To assess completion rates we calculated the proportions belonging to each attainment group who had remained on training for three consecutive six monthly time points, covering a time span of 18 months, as a proxy for completing training (Table 5.3). Although levels of non-completion were high among all attainment groups, these ranged from

nearly two-thirds among those with no Standard Grades compared to two-fifths among those with 3 or more Standard Grades at 1-3.

Although there appears to be a relationship between attainment and the completion of training, the patterns of movement from training into other statuses, are very similar for low attainers and all S4 leavers (Table 5.4).

Table 5.4: Male low attaining S4 leavers first change of status after entering YT on leaving school

	Low Attainers	All S4 Leavers
	%	%
Continuously on YT	8	10
YT to F/T Employment	56	58
YT to Unemployed	21	19
YT to Other	15	13
(n)	(131)	(229)

Three years after leaving school, over half (57%) of low attaining males who initially embarked on training were in full-time employment, around one in ten were still on a training scheme or in part-time work, while a quarter were unemployed (Figure 5.3). Comparing this to all low attaining males (Figure 5.1), the outcomes are very similar. Initial participation in training seems to reduce the likelihood of unemployment, but the differences are marginal and statistically insignificant. This would suggest that in terms of the outcome three years after leaving school, there is little indication that training significantly boosts employment chances. However, we know little about the nature of employment and the jobs low attainers access and it may be that those accessed through training may be of higher quality. Although there has been a lack of published studies of training programmes in Scotland in recent years, it will be the subject of a future analysis within this series of reports. Previous research into earlier versions of YT, both in Scotland and elsewhere in the UK, tended to show that although overall training enhanced the employment prospects of young people, it tended to have a negative effect on earnings (Furlong *et al.*, 1990; Joshi and Paci, 1997).

Unemployment and labour market exclusion

Since the contraction of the youth labour market that began in the mid-1970's unemployment among young school leavers has become common place. It could be argued that a spell of unemployment has become part of the normal transition process for most young people of all attainment levels and is simply part of the process of settling into the labour market. Certainly, at least during periods of recession, even the best qualified often experienced a spell of unemployment before gaining a foothold in the labour market. For the majority of young people spells of unemployment are short lived with few long-term adverse consequences. However, for other groups a prolonged period of unemployment in the early years of the labour market may have more severe consequences, leading to longer-term labour market exclusion.

Recent concerns have been expressed about young people aged 16 and 17 who are not in education, training or employment. This is currently the subject of a nationwide assessment by the Government's Social Exclusion Unit. A number of detailed local studies have been conducted into this group, sometimes referred to as being in 'Status Zero' (Istance *et al.*, 1994; Wilkinson, 1995; Armstrong, 1997). As far as we are aware there have been no attempts to identify the nature or extent of Status Zero in Scotland.

It is possible to estimate the proportion of 16 and 17 year-old S4 leavers who were not in education, training or employment at a given time, using the 6 monthly destination data and their birth dates. As we saw from Figures 5.1 and 5.2, unemployment rates fluctuated considerably as young people moved in and out of employment and training and other statuses. Table 5.5 shows us that between 14 and 28 percent of the S4 leavers who left school in 1992 were in Status Zero depending on the time point and gender. Females were more likely to be in Status Zero than males and low attainers were more vulnerable to this status compared to all S4 leavers. Although the differences between the males were generally small, low attaining females were particularly vulnerable. At any one time, well over one in five were in Status Zero and the proportion reached a peak of two-fifths in April 1993. It is also important to note that our calculation of Status Zero excludes those females who were recorded as doing 'Something Else'. Although the proportion of females recorded as doing 'Something Else' was small in October 1992 and April 1993 (3%), it was 12 and 7 percent respectively during the two later time points, many of whom had already withdrawn from the labour market.

Table 5.5: Percentage of 16 and 17 year-old S4 leavers not in education, training or employment or another recorded status†

	Oct '92	April '93	Oct '93	April '94
Low Attainers				
Males	19	15	17	17
Females	27	40	23	28
All S4 Leavers				
Males	15	15	14	15
Females	16	28	15	20

† Excludes those recorded as doing 'something else'

While the percentage of early leavers recorded as Status Zero is relatively high and clearly presents a problem, we can relate this to the entire cohort of young people by estimating the proportion of all 16 and 17 year-olds they represent. We know that among this cohort, 26 percent of males and 21 percent of females left school at the end of S4. Therefore, assuming that young people who leave at any stage during S5 are no more or less likely to be in Status Zero (which may not be the case), we can estimate the proportion of the entire cohort of 16 and 17 year olds in Status Zero at any one time. Calculations based on these assumptions showed that around 4 percent of the entire cohort of 16 and 17 year old males were in Status

Zero across the period, while the comparable figure for females fluctuated between 3 and 7 percent.

Table 5.2 showed that around one in twenty S4 leavers were recorded as continuously unemployed across the entire period of three years. Among males the proportion of low attainers who were continuously unemployed was very similar to that of all male S4 leavers (6 percent and 5 percent respectively). However, female low attainers were much more likely to have been continuously unemployed compared to other females (7 percent vs 3 percent).

Table 5.6 shows the first recorded change in status among those who had a first recorded destination of unemployment. Among those who become unemployed initially on leaving school, a quarter remained unemployed across the three-year period.

Table 5.6: Low attaining S4 leavers and their first change of status from their first recorded destination of unemployment between leaving school in 1992 and April 1995

	Male		Female	
	Low Attainers	All S4 Leavers	Low Attainers	All S4 Leavers
Continuously Unemployed	27	28	28	21
Unemployed to F/T Employment	23	19	18	16
Unemployed to YT	32	37	24	18
Unemployed to Other	18	16	31	45
(n)	(66)	(104)	(51)	(171)

Predicting unemployment at age 18/19 (April 1995)

To assess the range of factors relating to unemployment three years after leaving school, a logistic regression analysis was conducted. The analysis was carried out as a series of steps and includes all young people who left school from S4 regardless of their attainment. Firstly factors which were related to the young person's position at the end of S4 were assessed; these included attainment, family background factors, area unemployment and truancy. As a second step we considered their early destinations on leaving school to identify whether early routes on leaving had an impact on unemployment, and finally a range of factors were included which are associated with their subsequent experiences in the three years after leaving school. While the models provide an insight into the factors related to unemployment among S4 leavers, due to small cell sizes, especially among the females, the models may be sensitive to sampling fluctuations.

Model 1 examines factors relating to the end of S4. Among males Standard Grade attainment was associated with being unemployed at age 18/19. The risk of unemployment increased among those who gained no Standard Grades at all, but the difference in risk between those gaining 3+ Standard Grades at 1-3 and those gaining fewer or lower-level Standard Grades was not significant. Living in a LEC area with high unemployment significantly increased the chances of being unemployed as did having two unemployed parents. Compared to the

unclassified group, coming from a manual social background significantly reduced the risk of unemployment at age 18/19, although there was no significant difference between the unclassified group and those from a non-manual background.

Table 5.7: Males: Predicting unemployment at age 18/19

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Standard Grades:			
None	1.23***	.97*	.87*
Grades at 4-7 only	.083(ns)	-.29(ns)	.14(ns)
1-2 grades 1-3	-.61(ns)	-.68(ns)	-.37(ns)
LEC unemployment[4]	.07**	Ns	Ns
Parental unemployment:			
Both parents unemployed	2.51***	1.71***	2.01***
One parent unemployed	.35(ns)	.23(ns)	.18(ns)
Fathers social class:			
Non-Manual	-.35(ns)	-.41(ns)	ns
Manual	-1.18***	-.93***	ns
One or both parents educated 17+	ns	ns	ns
Truancy in S4			
Lesson or day	ns	ns	ns
Days or weeks	ns	ns	ns
First destination October '92			
Unemployed		7.94*	ns
Training		-.25(ns)	ns
College		-38(ns)	ns
Other		.09(ns)	ns
Apprentice (Spring)		-1.57***	ns
On job training (Spring)		-.61*	-.66**
Ever unemployed[5]			2.16***
Completed YT			ns
Improved Quals			-.89**
No of status changes			ns
Constant	-2.15***	-.25(ns)	-1.86***

Reference Category: S4 Attainment - 3+ Standard Grades at 1-3; Neither parent unemployed; Fathers Social Class - Unclassified; Never Truanted; Live with two parents; First Destination Employed.
Unweighted N=208
*p<.05; **p<.01; ***p<.001
ns denotes not statistically significant

In Model 2 we add data relating to the early destinations of our S4 leaver group. This does not have a major impact on the previous model, with the exception of the unemployment rate in the LEC area, which becomes non-significant. This suggests that local employment conditions were important in determining whether young people gained their first foothold in the labour market, but had less direct influence on subsequent progress. Those who experienced an early spell of unemployment were particularly vulnerable to subsequent problems in the labour market. Compared to directly entering employment, entering training or college did not significantly reduce the chances of being unemployed at age 18/19.

[4] The unemployment rate used for this study has been derived from the Labour Force Survey (LFS) of May 1992 using the definition provided by the International Labour Office (ILO). It is based on all economically-active people of working age.

[5] The variable for 'ever unemployed' was based on the middle destinations over the period and excluded first destination unemployed which is already in the model and unemployed at April 1995, in order to define it independently of the dependent variable.

However, if the young person entered a recognised apprenticeship or received on-the-job training this significantly reduced the likelihood that they would be unemployed.

Finally in Model 3 we add some detail about their experiences in the intervening period between their early destinations and the age of 18/19 (April 1995). This final model shows us the most important factors in predicting unemployment around three years after leaving school. Having achieved no Standard Grades remained an important determinant of unemployment, as did having two unemployed parents. Avoiding an earlier spell of unemployment significantly enhanced the chance of not being unemployed at age 18/19. In addition, receiving on-the-job training or improving qualifications in any way significantly reduced the risks of unemployment. After controlling for these factors, there was no evidence of effect on unemployment associated with completing Youth Training or the number of changes in statuses across the period.

Overall then for males, Standard Grade qualifications were important in so far as those who gained no awards whatsoever were more likely to be unemployed than those who achieved any awards at Standard Grade. Those who gain no awards are a small group and it is unclear whom exactly they represent; they are likely to include those who were particularly disaffected with school and failed to present for their Standard Grades as well as those with Records of Needs being educated within mainstream schools. Living in an area of high unemployment and, independent of this, having two unemployed parents increased the risk of unemployment. Having a father from a manual social class significantly reduced risk. A possible explanation for the particular advantage among these young males is that having a father in a manual occupation gave them access to the sorts of jobs that male S4 leavers typically enter. Therefore compared to fathers in the unclassified group and the small numbers in non-manual backgrounds, fathers in manual occupations may be in a position to provide useful advice or to use contacts through their networks to aid their sons onto the employment ladder.

For males therefore, it was local opportunities that were the main determinant of subsequent unemployment rather than their individual characteristics. In addition, those who managed to gain employment with on-the-job training or apprenticeships on leaving school, had more secure employment prospects and many were likely to be in the same jobs at age 18/19.

Table 5.8 examines the same range of factors in relation to females. Model 1 reveals that Standard Grades worked differently for females. Whereas for males it was those who gained any awards who had a significant advantage, among females it was those who gained 3+ Standard Grades who were least likely to be unemployed at age 18/19. Neither the area unemployment rate, parental unemployment or social class appeared to have a significant effect on unemployment chances. However, the measure of local area unemployment used for the analysis is based on all economically-active adults and may be a stronger reflection of conditions in adult male sectors of employment rather than sectors available to young

females. Truancy during S4 was an important determinant for females of being unemployed at age 18/19.

Table 5.8: Females: Predicting unemployment at age 18/19

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Standard Grades:			
None	1.84***	2.44***	ns
Grades at 4-7 only	1.09**	1.63***	ns
1-2 grades at 1-3	1.43***	1.69***	ns
LEC unemployment	Ns	ns	ns
Parental Unemployment:			
Both parents unemployed	Ns	ns	ns
One parent unemployed	Ns	ns	ns
Fathers social class:			
Non-Manual	Ns	ns	ns
Manual	Ns	ns	ns
One or both parents educated 17+	Ns	ns	Excluded
Truancy in S4			
Lesson or day	.62*	ns	ns
Days or weeks	1.27***	ns	1.00**
First destination October '92			
Unemployed		.46 (ns)	ns
Training		.89**	ns
College		.48 (ns)	ns
Other		-8.09 (ns)	ns
Apprentice (Spring)		ns	ns
On job training (Spring)		-1.05***	ns
Ever unemployed			2.29***
Completed YT			Ns
Improved Quals			Ns
No of status changes			Ns
Constant	-2.63***	-1.93***	-2.49***

Reference Category: S4 Attainment - 3+ Standard Grades at 1-3; Neither parent unemployed; Fathers Social Class - Unclassified; Never Truanted; Live with two parents; First Destination Employed.
Unweighted N=140
*p< .05; **p<.01; ***p< .001

In terms of early destinations (Model 2), compared to those who entered directly into employment, becoming unemployed on leaving school did not increase the likelihood of subsequent unemployment. However, a comparison of those who entered directly into employment with the other destinations showed that those who entered training were more likely to be unemployed at age 18/19. As with the males the importance of gaining on-the-job training reduced the likelihood of being unemployed at 18/19.

The final model shows us that at age 18/19 the most important predictor of unemployment was having an earlier experience of unemployment. After controlling for this the only other factor related to unemployment which was parental education. Surprisingly, having better-educated parents appeared to increase the risk of unemployment, while this was confirmed through cross-tabulation, due to the small numbers of female S4 leavers with parents

educated past the minimum age and the strong correlation with other variables in the model it was decided to exclude this variable. Once parental education was excluded, truancy once again became a significant predictor of unemployment at age 18/19. Having a first destination of unemployment did not increase unemployment risk, but any subsequent period of unemployment greatly increased the chances of being unemployed at age 18/19. The absence of social background factors and the non-significant relationship of the unemployment variables suggest that for females it is individual factors that appear to explain unemployment. The absence of the influence of social background at this stage may be explained by its earlier effect as it is a stronger determinant of attainment and of leaving school at the end of S4 for females, than is the case for males.

Summary

S4 leavers routes:

- On leaving school in 1992 the most common destination among low attaining males was training followed by entry into full-time employment. Compared to males more females entered full-time employment and fewer entered training.
- Low attaining young people's early careers were characterised by uncertainty, with frequent switching between statuses.
- Low attaining females showed a greater level of switching between statuses compared to males, some entered training at a late stage although there is a general progression towards unemployment or withdrawal from the labour market.
- By the age of 18/19, nearly three years after leaving school, a majority of low attaining males were in some form of full-time employment with just over a quarter unemployed. In contrast, among the females just over a third were in full-time employment, over two-fifths were unemployed, while around one in ten had already started a family.

Training routes:

- Many of those who entered training left prematurely. Among the males, while completion of training was related to qualification level, dropout from training was relatively high among all attainment groups. Drop-out rates ranged from 62 percent of those with no Standard Grades to 40 percent of those with 3 or more passes at grades 1-3.
- Although we witnessed movement in and out of employment and training, those who had prior experience of training and then became unemployed were unlikely to re-enter at a later stage.

Unemployment:

- Around one in twenty S4 leavers had a recorded destination of out of work across the entire period of three years.
- Low attaining 16 and 17 year olds were more likely to be in Status Zero than their better qualified peers, and this is especially true for females.

- The proportions in Status Zero represent a relatively small proportion of all 16 and 17 year olds. Depending on the time point and gender it ranged between 3 and 7 percent.
- Standard Grade qualifications were an important determinant of unemployment at age 18/19, although the cut-off points are different for males and females. Among males, having any Standard Grades significantly reduced the risk of unemployment, whereas for females it was having 3+ Standard Grades that significantly reduced the risk.
- In addition to qualifications, local opportunity structures were the best predictor of unemployment at age 18/19 for males. Compared to the males, personal characteristics were a more important determinant for females.

Chapter 6

Escaping low attainment

While the previous chapter focused solely on young people who had left school at the end of S4, this chapter looks at the entire low attainment group irrespective of the stage at which they left school. It examines the extent to which young people who achieved poor Standard Grade results in S4 managed to improve on their qualifications by the age of 18/19 and the means by which they did so. Once again it is based on the Reconstructed Cohort of young people who were in S4 in 1992 and assesses the qualifications they had obtained by the spring of 1995.

The best qualification gained by age 18/19 was calculated on the basis of young people's self-reported qualifications. Where young people stated they had gained a named recognised qualification this was given priority over the reported number of individual modules completed and Highers were given priority over vocational qualifications.

Just over half (55 percent) of all the young people who had poor Standard Grade results in S4 managed to improve their qualifications in some way by the age of 18/19 (Table 6.1). Among those who gained some form of additional qualifications, most only gained a few modules and very few gained a significant number of modules or completed a recognised vocational course. Compared to females, low attaining males were more likely to have gained vocational qualifications and very few females gained vocational qualifications above Level 1. However, despite their very poor Standard Grade results, a small proportion of around one in ten of our low attainers managed to go on to gain some Highers, with 4 percent managing to achieve 3+ Highers at grades A to C.

Table 6.1: S4 Low attainers' best qualification attained by age 18/19 (All Cohort)

	Males	Females
	%	%
None after S Grade	45	45
1-9 Modules	24	29
10-18 Modules	4	5
19+ Modules	6	4
Other Voc Course	*	-
Voc Level 1	4	4
Voc Level 2	7	1
Voc Level 3	3	-
1-2 Highers at A-C	4	8
3+ Highers at A-C	4	4
(n)	(637)	(460)

*Less than 1 percent

The stage at which low attainers left school varied according to gender, with females more likely to remain at school for longer. Fifty-five percent of low attaining males left school at the end of S4, compared to 48 percent of females, while 13 percent and 19 percent, respectively, left at the end of S6. The remaining third of poorly qualified males and females

left at some point during S5. Table 6.2 shows the percentages of low attainers who improved their qualifications by at least one module by age 18/19 by the stage at which they left school. Due to small sample sizes it is not appropriate to break this down by the type of qualification gained.

Table 6.2: Low attainers improving their qualifications by at least one module between S4 and age 18/19

	Males		Females	
	Minimum aged Leavers[1]	S5 or S6 Leavers	Minimum aged Leavers	S5 or S6 Leavers
	%	%	%	%
No improvement	56	8	65	9
Improved qualifications	44	93	35	91
(n)	(490)	(147)	(290)	(162)

[1]Includes Winter Leavers

Despite the limited definition of an improvement in qualification, ie one module, by the age of 18/19, only 55 percent of low attaining young people had gained any additional qualifications. This however varied substantially depending on whether they had remained at school or not. Among those who left school at the end of S4 or were Winter leavers, over half of males and nearly two-thirds of females had failed to improve their qualifications in any way by age 18/19. In sharp contrast the vast majority of those who remained at school had some improvement in their qualifications. It is perhaps not surprising that those who remain at school were more likely to improve their qualifications, compared to the others that embarked on a range of routes. Nevertheless, the majority of early school leavers entered some form of employment, training, or education that provided the opportunity to gain further qualifications and the disparities are wider than we might expect.

Due to the complexity of the routes followed by low attaining young people that were highlighted in Chapter 5, it is difficult to assess the qualification outcomes from the various routes young people follow. As young people frequently moved between statuses it is only possible to present data based on their initial destinations. Table 6.3 shows the proportions that had improved their qualifications by their destination in the spring. Initial destinations appear to have a significant bearing on whether young people improved their qualifications. Those who were initially unemployed on leaving school were least likely to improve their qualifications, where four out of five showed no improvement. Only two-fifths of those who entered employment and less than half of those who entered training gained any additional qualifications. Those who remained at school or entered FE were much more likely to gain some form of additional qualifications. It is often assumed that young people with low levels of attainment may be more suited to other forms of education or training outside of the school environment. Contrary to these assumptions remaining at school was the route whereby most low attainers managed to gain additional qualifications. Compared to males, females who entered employment were less likely to gain additional qualifications, while the reverse is true

among trainees. Although fewer females enter training, those who did so were much more likely to gain additional qualifications compared to males.

Table 6.3: Low attainers and whether or not they had improved their qualifications by at least 1 module by age 18/19, by destination in the spring after becoming eligible to leave school (excludes Winter leavers)

	F/time Job	Training	Unemployed	School	College	Other
Males:						
No improvement	60	54	82	8	17	85
Improved qualifications	40	46	18	93	83	15
(n)	(134)	(126)	(50)	(147)	(12)	(20)
Females:						
No improvement	72	44	94	9	35	54
Improved qualifications	28	56	6	91	65	46
(n)	(54)	(45)	(80)	(162)	(20)	(13)

S4 leavers

We have highlighted that among low attainers, those who remain at school are more likely to improve their qualifications. To assess whether the low levels of improvement among S4 leavers were associated with their prior attainment, we compared low attaining S4 leavers with the wider group of all leavers irrespective of the prior qualifications (Table 6.4).

Table 6.4: S4 leavers best qualification attained by age 18/19

	Males		Females	
	Low Attainers	All S4 Leavers	Low Attainers	All S4 Leavers
None after S/Grade	62	60	71	53
1-9 Modules	17	16	18	23
10-18 Modules	4	3	2	2
19+ Modules	6	7	1	3
Other Vocational	1	2	-	1
Voc Level 1	2	3	7	6
Voc Level 2	2	5	-	7
Voc Level 3	3	5	-	1
1 or 2 Highers A-C	-	-	1	3
3+ Highers A-C	-	-	-	1
(n)	(348)	(696)	(220)	(495)

Overall, around six out of ten males and females who left school after S4 failed to gain any form of additional qualifications in the three years after leaving school. Among the males, the differences between the low attaining S4 leavers and all S4 leavers were minimal. On the other hand when we compare low attaining females to the wider group of S4 leavers there were stark differences. Although overall female S4 leavers were more likely to improve their qualifications compared to males, among the low attaining females 71 percent failed to improve on their qualifications. This particularly poor improvement in qualifications among low attaining females is likely to be a reflection of gender differentials and the importance of qualifications in employment and training opportunities for females.

As we highlighted in Chapter 5, many young people who entered training were likely to drop out along the way. To assess whether the poor level of improvement in qualifications among trainees was associated with the high levels of dropout, we compared those males who had a recorded destination of training for three consecutive six monthly time points as a proxy for completing training to others who had not remained on training (again due to the small numbers of females who entered training this was only possible for the males). Those who had remained in training for a minimum of 18 months were more likely to have improved their qualifications. However, despite 'completing' training, half (49%) had not even gained one additional module. Considering that vocational qualifications were an integral part of their training, the low levels of improvement among trainees must be of particular concern.

Table 6.5: Whether or not males improved on their qualifications from S4 after entering YT (S4 leavers only)

	Consecutively on YT for 3 points from first destination		Not consecutive	
	Low Attainers	All S4 Leavers	Low Attainers	All S4 Leavers
	%	%	%	%
No improvement	49	49	49	59
Improved qualifications	51	51	51	41
(n)	(55)	(107)	(76)	(122)

Summary

- Just 55 percent of low attainers (ie those who had no Standard Grade awards at 1-3 in S4) gained additional qualifications by the age of 18/19.
- Among those who gained additional qualifications, most only gained a few additional modules.
- Low attainers who stayed on at school to S5 or S6 were much more likely to have gained additional qualifications than those who left at the minimum school leaving age.
- Among the low attainers who stayed on to S5 or S6 less than one in ten males and females failed to gain further qualifications.
- Among the low attainers who left school at the minimum age half of males and two-thirds of females failed to gain any further qualifications.
- Female low-attainers were less likely than other minimum-age school leavers to improve their qualifications by age 18/19.
- A majority of males who entered Youth Training on leaving school failed to gain additional qualifications. Although many of those who entered training left at an early stage, even among those who remained on training for at least 18 months just over half gained any qualification.
- Low attainers were no more or less likely to have improved their qualifications compared to all S4 leavers who entered Youth Training.

Chapter 7

Summary and discussion

This report has analysed a range of factors associated with male and female low attainment and the subsequent routes of low attainers leaving S4 up to the age of 19, using the Scottish School Leavers Survey data from 1978 up until 1996. In this final chapter we pull together the main findings and discuss their implications.

Low attainment

The most significant trend across the period of the study (1978-1996) is the extent to which low attainment has declined. Since the introduction of Standard Grades, all young people now have access to national certification. As a result, the proportions achieving no awards fell sharply and by 1996 represented a small proportion of the year cohort. The proportion achieving no awards at 1-3 also continued to decline, but at a slower pace. Despite these clear improvements, a significant proportion of Scottish young people by 1996 were still achieving low levels of attainment. There were however significant differences in terms of gender. In 1978 the extent of low attainment was broadly similar between the sexes; females however have improved at a faster rate than males, and by 1996 just over one in ten females achieved no Standard Grade awards at 1-3 compared with one in five males.

Overall, after considering a range of factors likely to be associated with low attainment, we concluded social background and area characteristics remained the strongest predictor of low attainment. Low attainment was associated with having a father in a manual or unclassified occupation, having parents who left school at the earliest opportunity, living in council or other rented accommodation, and living in a deprived neighbourhood. These factors were all related to low attainment and disadvantage tended to be cumulative. In addition we found evidence that even after controlling for these factors some schools appeared to do better than others in reducing low attainment.

We found limited evidence to support recent claims that young people's attitudes towards education have become more negative (in particular young males), and that low attainment is associated with disaffection. Although low attainers had slightly more negative attitudes towards school and their teachers than their better-qualified peers, substantial proportions of low attainers expressed positive attitudes towards school and their teachers. Among females, negative attitudes to teachers were a significant factor in predicting low attainment, after taking account of social background factors, but this effect was not found among males.

There have been numerous explanations of differential achievement between the sexes. A recent review of issues relating to gender and attainment (Powney, 1996), summarised the explanations of the differences in terms of three main competing theories: bias in assessment, biological explanations and environmental theories. While biological theories were plausible

explanations for as long as gender differences remained stable, the recent reversal of the trend in terms of attainment and gender contradicts their deterministic nature.

Turner *et al.* (1995) found a perception among Education Authorities in Scotland that females in particular had benefited from the inclusion of assessed course work and curriculum changes within Standard Grade. Although evaluation of gender bias within assessment is clearly beyond the scope of this report, the fact that females were improving their position relative to males before the introduction of Standard Grades suggests that this does not provide the whole explanation.

Gender differentials in the relative performance of males and females were not explained by social background factors. The social class composition of low attaining males was broader than that for females, with more low attaining males coming from non-manual social class backgrounds. However, once we accounted for these social class differences they did not explain the other observed differences between low attaining males and females.

In terms of their characteristics and behaviour, low attaining males appear to be a less homogeneous group than the females. Differences in the background and behaviour of low attaining males and their better qualified peers were not as wide as we might expect. Among females the differences between low attainers and those with better qualifications were clearer. Low attaining females appeared to form a more distinct group compared to the better qualified females, and were concentrated among those from the most deprived social backgrounds, received less parental encouragement and were much more likely to truant and hold negative attitudes towards school and the teachers.

A number of recent studies have moved away from individual explanations of low attainment and focused on the role of gendered peer-group cultures. These have focused either on changes taking place in the attitudes of young women towards work and family life (Gaskell, 1992; Sharpe, 1994), or alternatively, on the role of masculine identities which, although changing and varied, often do not condone academic success. This has led some to argue that young men have failed to adapt to rapid and changing social and economic conditions (Kimmel, 1996). Whilst we found family and area to be the main factors in predicting low attainment, peer-group cultures may have a role in explaining gender differences in attainment. Compared to females, males among both attainment groups held more negative attitudes. Although female low attainers had more positive attitudes than similarly qualified males, their views were more at odds with other better-qualified females than was the case for males.

Clearly over the last two decades achievements have been made within the Scottish education system, both in the reduction of the levels of low attainment and in the increases in post-compulsory educational participation. While these changes may be partially related to broader changes outside of education, such as changes within the labour market and in the changing social composition of year groups, the trend is encouraging. As general levels of education increase it is largely inevitable that low attainment will be redefined at a higher level. What

may be of more concern when considering low attainment is implications for young people's ability to participate in the labour market.

In a rapidly changing labour market, qualifications are increasingly necessary to get ahead, a trend according to economic forecasts that is likely to continue. Young people who fail to achieve even 'minimum' levels of educational success are likely to become marginalised and prone to long-term labour market exclusion. Often lacking in basic skills they will be poorly equipped to reverse their disadvantaged position through subsequent learning opportunities. Our results suggest that tackling deprivation and countering educational disadvantage associated with a young person's family background, rather than focusing on disaffection, is likely to be the way forward in reducing low levels of attainment. This would provide support for recent initiatives aimed at early intervention, family literacy schemes and New Community Schools, especially in Scotland's most deprived areas.

Whilst the focus of recent policy concerns has been on the disaffected low achieving male, our results suggest that overall policies which tackle educational disadvantage at an early stage, which stems from a young person's background, are likely to be most fruitful in reducing low attainment among both sexes. We have not been able to explain fully gender differentials in low attainment, which are likely to be complex and related to peer-group cultures. This would suggest that there might be a role for policies that attempt to counter the more negative attitudes among males within the school. There is however evidence from elsewhere that such an approach would need to be well considered, as policies designed to challenge aspects of masculine identities have sometimes been found to be counterproductive leading to overtly negative responses (Kenway, 1995). Such an approach would be relatively new in Britain and would require further assessment. In addition, further research into the school differences we identified may highlight policies and best practice for countering low attainment at the school level.

Post-sixteen routes

The major changes that have occurred over the last two decades within the labour market have had a radical effect on low attaining young people leaving school from S4. In particular we witnessed a large fall in the numbers leaving school and entering directly into employment, which had more than halved. We know from other studies that the decline in employment opportunities has led to an increase in participation among low attainers within the upper secondary school, although among those who continue to leave, the decline in employment has largely been offset by participation in training.

The trend in participation in training has tended to follow the economic cycle and despite numerous changes to training programmes and attempts to create a training route in its own right, a desire among low attainers for employment rather than training seems to have prevailed. The impact of the abolition of benefits for most 16 and 17 year olds, coupled with the training 'guarantee' also appears to have been short-lived. Although it initially boosted

participation in training, especially among low attaining males, subsequent surveys showed increases in unemployment among our early leavers.

While the trend data captures a snapshot of the early destinations and the changing pattern of participation among low attainers over time, in Chapter 5 we highlighted the high degree of instability in the routes followed over the three year period after leaving school. Although a small proportion found their way into stable employment, the routes of the majority were characterised by uncertainty with frequent switching between statuses. In particular we witnessed high proportions of young people leaving training prematurely, but on the positive side many left training to enter to full-time employment.

There were considerable differences in terms of gender in the early careers of low attainers. While more females entered employment, on leaving school they had lower levels of participation in training. This is likely to be a reflection of gender segmented training and employment opportunities, however the longer-term consequences of low attainment for females seemed particularly severe. Whereas for males in the three years after leaving school, there was a gradual drift towards finding employment, over time increasing proportions of low attaining females became unemployed or withdrew from the labour market altogether, with only around a third in full-time employment at age 18/19. Among those who experienced an early spell of unemployment, significant proportions began early parenting careers. Although the majority of young women were choosing to delay parenthood into their late twenties, faced with limited prospects on the labour market, these young women appeared to be 'choosing' parenthood as an alternative career.

In sharp contrast to the position of low attaining females, low attainment among young men appears to be less of a handicap. Compared to the better-qualified S4 leavers low attainers were less likely to have been continually employed, to complete training and showed a greater degree of instability in the routes they followed. However, the majority were employed at age 18/19 and the differences between low attaining males and better-qualified S4 leavers were often minimal. For males the risk of unemployment was closely tied to the local opportunity structures; however, those who gained no Standard Grade awards appeared to face particular disadvantage in the labour market. For females personal characteristics were more important, and it was the leavers with 3+ Standard Grades that were least at risk from subsequent unemployment.

The implications of these results seem to highlight the need for greater flexibility within the provision for this age group. Many of today's young people of all attainment levels are faced with a constantly changing and difficult labour market and many have few clear ideas about the occupations that they should enter. Those with better qualifications often keep their options open by upgrading their qualifications in broad general areas, whereas low attainers are often forced to make early career decisions. It is important that post-16 provision for this group remains flexible and not closed by barriers such as age or previous participation, so that young people are given the opportunity to backtrack, make false starts good and repair

fractured and broken transitions. In addition, there appears to be a role for proactive and continuing careers support and guidance to assist these young people through these clearly uncertain times. Low attaining females, although fewer in number, represent a group particularly at risk and there appears to be a need to review the types of provision within education and training available to them.

Escaping low attainment

In Chapter 6 we considered the extent that low attainers manage to improve on their qualifications in the three years after leaving school, and we assessed the routes by which they did so. Just over half of all low attainers gained any form of additional qualifications and, among those who gained additional qualifications the majority only achieved a few additional modules. However, one in ten low attainers actually managed to achieve some Higher passes at grades A-C. There were however considerable differences between those who left school at the minimum-age compared to those remaining at school. While the vast majority of those who remained at school until the end of S5 or S6 gained some form of additional qualification the majority of early leaving low attainers failed to improve their qualifications.

Male S4 leavers' prior low attainment appeared to have relatively little impact on whether or not they improved their qualifications. Irrespective of their prior qualifications, few S4 leavers gained recognised vocational qualifications; low attainers were however less likely to gain such qualifications. Overall female S4 leavers were more likely to gain some form of additional qualification, although there was a considerable gap between those leavers with slightly better qualifications and the low attainers, who achieved less than similarly qualified males.

Due to the complexity of the routes low attaining S4 leavers follow, it is not possible to assess accurately the exact means by which young people improve their qualifications. Looking at their initial destinations showed that the small proportion who entered FE were most likely to gain additional qualifications followed some way behind by those who entered Youth Training. Those who had an initial destination of unemployment or 'something else' were least likely to gain additional qualifications.

As studying towards a vocational qualification, normally at SVQ level II, was by that time an integral part of training we were somewhat surprised by the high proportions of those who entered training and failed to achieve any additional qualifications. Over half of males and two-fifths of females reported they had not even gained one additional module. For males we were able to assess whether this was due to the high levels of dropout, which we had identified in Chapter 5. Although those who 'completed' training were more likely to have gained some form of qualification, around half had not gained an additional module despite remaining in training for at least 18 months. Comparing low attainers to all S4 leavers showed no differences in the percentages achieving no qualification and the fact that low

attainers who 'completed' training were no more or less likely to have gained additional qualifications, points to a more fundamental problem.

Our analysis was based on a cohort where the majority of those in training would have been on Youth Training, as Skillseekers was only beginning to be phased in at that time and would not have been widely available. Skillseekers has led to some more positive developments and has proved more popular both with young people and employers and has placed an increased emphasis on gaining a qualification. Although the Scottish Enterprise evaluation of Skillseekers has highlighted a recent increase in the relatively small proportions gaining a recognised vocational qualification, the lack of certification through the work-based route is likely to represent a continuing area of concern.

The Teaching and Higher Education Act 1998, which provides for 16 and 17 year olds for time off to study towards a Level II qualification, comes into force in September 1999. While clearly a positive development in extending working young people's rights to time off for education or training, our results suggest this is unlikely to significantly boost training to Level II among early school leavers. Not only may young people have potential difficulties to overcome in exercising this right, especially if the employer is reluctant, but the low levels of completion we found among those whose qualification was an integral part of their training suggests that there may be further difficulties to overcome.

Contrary to assumptions that low attainers are best suited to learning opportunities outside of the school, our results show that school was the route whereby most low attainers upgraded their qualifications. However, without further longitudinal data which goes beyond the age of 18/19, we will be unable to assess whether the limited improvements they make to their qualifications result in real benefits within the labour market. Policies are beginning to address this group in providing access to Modern Apprenticeship training for those who remain at school. However, there is clearly the risk that those low attainers who remain at school may exclude themselves from the traditional access points for many of the occupations they are likely to enter. It is mostly young men who enter Modern Apprenticeships, so low attaining females are doubly excluded from this provision.

The role of lifelong learning in tackling low attainment was also highlighted in the government consultation paper 'Social Exclusion in Scotland'. The creation of adult learning opportunities may be an important measure in creating a flexible workforce within a rapidly changing economy. However, we have seen that young people leaving school with limited achievements do not, on the whole, improve their qualifications and if future predictions are correct the failure to do so may further increase their risk of exclusion.

Conclusion

The recent policy concerns and focus on the under achievement of young males has to some extent ignored the real improvements that have been made over the last couple of decades in reducing low attainment among young people of both sexes. However, in terms of Scotland's

economic competitiveness, tackling low attainment is likely to remain a key priority area. The recent focus on achieving educational targets has turned the attention on the males who form the majority of low attainers. However such a policy focus may result in the smaller group of low attaining females being forgotten in the process. Whilst females have improved at a faster rate than the males, the consequence of low attainment for females in the labour market was found to have more serious consequences.

Qualifications are becoming increasingly important and are likely to continue to do so. However, our results suggest that, despite their lack of qualifications, a majority of the low attaining males found employment. Clearly, at least in the mid-1990's, opportunities remained in male segments of the labour market for young people with limited qualification success. It is important to highlight that by age 18/19, the transition process for many of our S4 leavers may be far from complete and it therefore would be unwise to assume that those who are in employment at this stage have entered long-term stable careers. Due to the high degree of instability in low attainers' early careers, it is too early say whether they have made successful transitions and with the continued restructuring of the labour market whether their low attainment may lead to longer-term problems in the future. The few existing studies that have followed young people into their mid-twenties have consistently shown that young people of both sexes, who have limited educational success, are much more likely to be unemployed, and that those in employment concentrated in unskilled and unstable sectors of the economy (Bynner, 1997).

While retrospective policies may be important in providing low attaining young people with a second chance to improve their qualifications, our results would suggest that they are unlikely to significantly reduce the low levels of attainment. This therefore places an emphasis on tackling low attainment at the earliest stage possible. There is however clearly a need for longitudinal data going well beyond the age of 18/19 in order to assess the longer-term consequences of low attainment and to examine the routes of the increasing proportion of low attainers who are choosing to remain at school. The establishment of an SSLS follow-up survey at age 23, which has been conducted for the first time in 1999, will provide the opportunity to further assess these issues.

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Appendix 1

Table A1.1

	Males		Females		Total	
	Not low Attainer	Low Attainer	Not low Attainer	Low Attainer	Not low Attainer	Low Attainer
Owner-occupied	75.1	46.9	70.6	33.8	72.7	42.0
Council, SH, NTDC	18.7	42.4	23.6	53.0	21.2	46.3
Housing Association	2.6	7.8	2.4	8.5	2.5	8.0
Rented Privately/Other	3.7	3.0	3.4	4.6	3.5	3.7
(n)	2536	606	2745	364	5280	970
p		.000		.000		.000

Note: p describes level of significance of the difference between low attainers and others on a chi-square test.

Table A1.2

Social Class	Males		Females		Total	
	Not low Attainer	Low Attainer	Not low Attainer	Low Attainer	Not low Attainer	Low Attainer
I	8.5	2.1	7.4	1.1	7.9	1.7
II	24.1	7.0	23.7	7.5	23.9	7.2
IIIn	8.0	2.5	8.7	1.3	8.4	2.0
IIIm	27.5	29.6	26.9	21.1	27.2	26.4
IV	10.5	11.0	10.8	14.4	10.7	12.3
V	3.1	5.2	2.7	5.6	2.9	5.4
Unclassified	18.3	42.6	19.8	49.1	19.1	45.0
	2568	611	2782	375	5349	986
p		.000		.000		.000

Table A1.3

	Males		Females		Total	
	Not low Attainer	Low Attainer	Not low Attainer	Low Attainer	Not low Attainer	Low Attainer
Both 17+	14.0	3.3	13.0	2.1	13.5	2.8
One 17+	20.6	6.7	22.4	6.9	21.6	6.8
One or both 16+	30.7	43.8	31.8	37.1	31.3	41.3
Both 15	14.5	19.7	17.6	22.8	16.1	20.8
One 15, One no info.	3.9	8.2	4.0	7.2	3.9	7.8
Don't Know/ No info.	16.3	18.4	11.3	23.9	13.7	20.5
(n)	2567	610	2782	377	5349	986
p		.000		.000		.000

Table A1.4: Attainment by whom lived with in S4

	Males		Females		Total	
	Not low Attainer	Low Attainer	Not low Attainer	Low Attainer	Not low Attainer	Low Attainer
Mother and Father	76.9	67.5	75.4	61.4	76.1	65.2
Mother and Step Father	5.4	3.8	5.5	5.1	5.4	4.3
Father and Step Mother	1.3	2.1	0.8	-	1.0	1.3
Mother Only	11.5	21.3	13.0	25.4	12.3	22.8
Father Only	1.9	2.3	2.0	2.2	1.9	2.3
Other Relatives	1.1	1.0	1.1	4.3	1.1	2.3
Foster Parents	0.4	-	0.2	0.5	0.3	0.2
Boarding School	1.3	0.3	1.0	0.5	1.1	0.4
School Hostel	0.1	0.3	0.3	-	0.2	0.2
Other	0.4	1.3	0.7	0.5	0.5	1.0
(n)	2549	607	2761	370	5312	977
p		.000		.000		.000

Table A1.5: Attainment by number of siblings

	Males		Females		Total	
	Not low Attainer	Low Attainer	Not low Attainer	Low Attainer	Not low Attainer	Low Attainer
None	7.2	6.9	6.5	1.6	6.8	4.8
One	43.2	34.0	41.7	32.7	42.4	33.5
Two	28.6	31.6	29.9	25.2	29.3	29.1
Three	12.1	10.9	12.2	14.5	12.2	12.4
Four +	8.9	16.5	9.7	26.0	9.3	20.1
(n)	2553	605	2775	373	5331	978
p		.000		.000		.000

Appendix 2

Table A2.1: Multilevel model predicting low attainment

	Males	Females
Father's Social Class:		
Manual	0.85(0.28)	0.81(0.31)
Unclassified	1.53(0.29)	1.35(0.32)
Parental Education:		
One parent 17+	-0.03(0.61)	-0.03(0.67)
Both minimum-age	1.28(0.54)	0.87(0.61)
Missing	0.97(0.57)	1.37(0.63)
Deprivation of Post code:		
Next most Affluent	-0.15(0.32)	0.28(0.38)
Next Most Deprived	0.30(0.30)	0.85(0.35)
Most Deprived	0.82(0.30)	0.92(0.35)
Missing	0.26(0.45)	0.31(0.50)
Housing Type:		
Council Owned	0.74(0.18)	0.77(0.21)
Missing	-0.83(0.94)	0.35(0.59)
Attitude to teachers*	ns	-12.59(3.6)
Missing		-1.73(0.6)
No. of Siblings	ns	
One		1.51(0.68)
Two		1.45(0.69)
Three +		2.02(0.68)
Missing		1.44(1.53)
Constant	-4.59(0.54)	-6.75(0.92)
Between school variance	1.30(0.29)	0.65(0.23)

* The "attitude to teachers" measure is derived by adding together positive scores of the five items listed in Table 3.2

Appendix 3

Table A3.1: Low attaining females who left school after S4 and are doing something else at April 1995: parental and marital status

	Percent
Married or living as married, with children	71
Married without children	-
Lone Parent	7
Neither married or have kids	21
(n)	(28)

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